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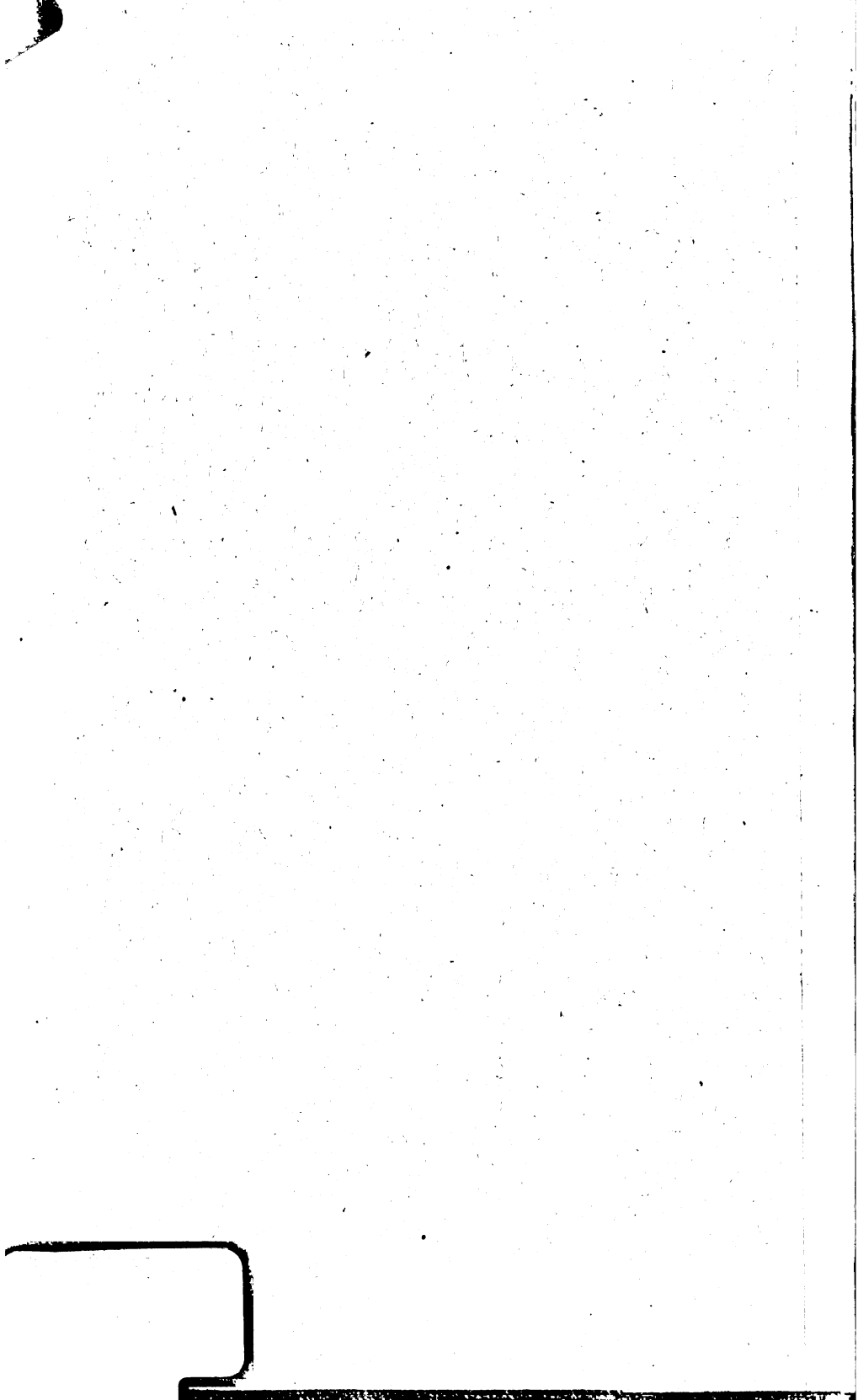
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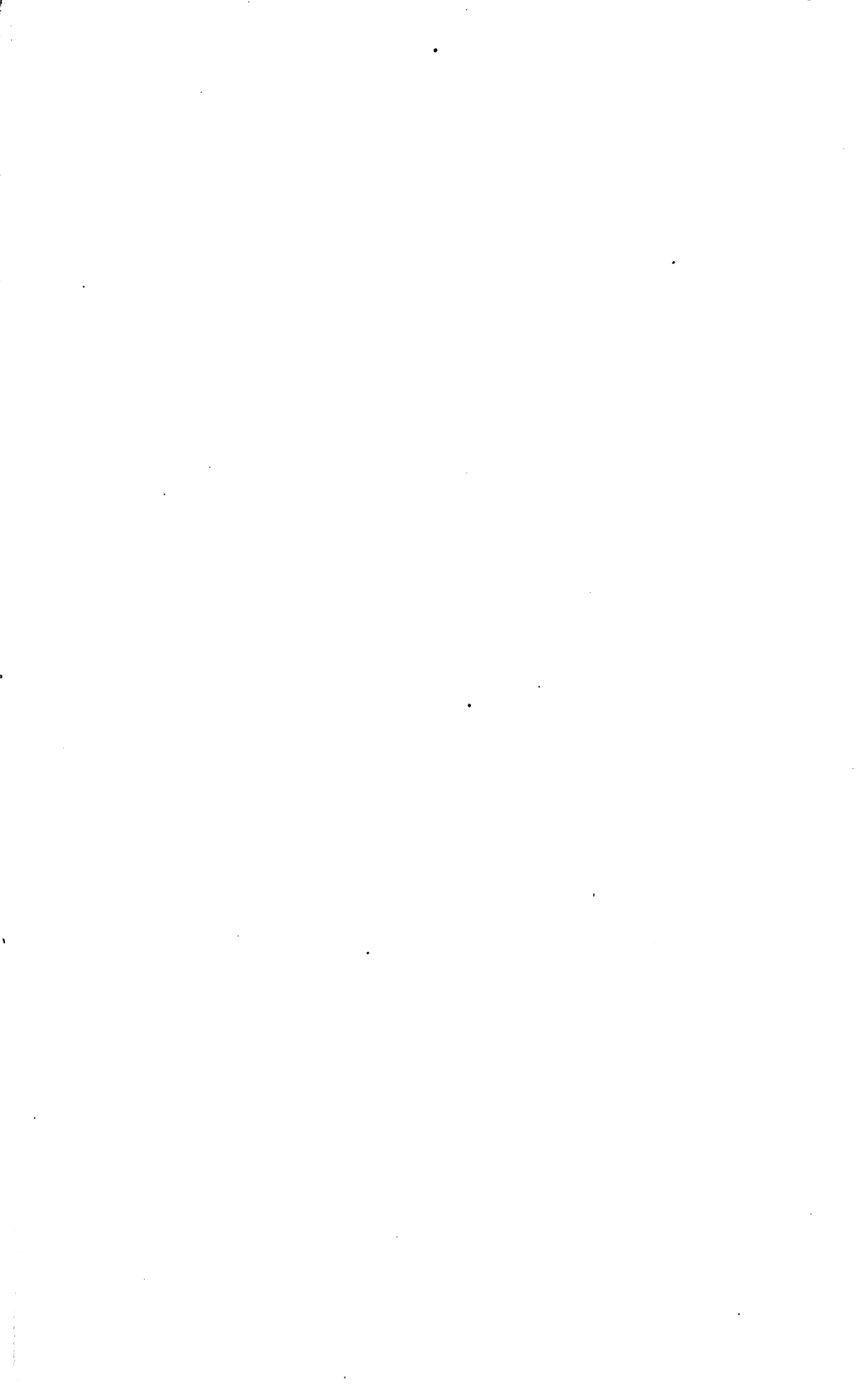
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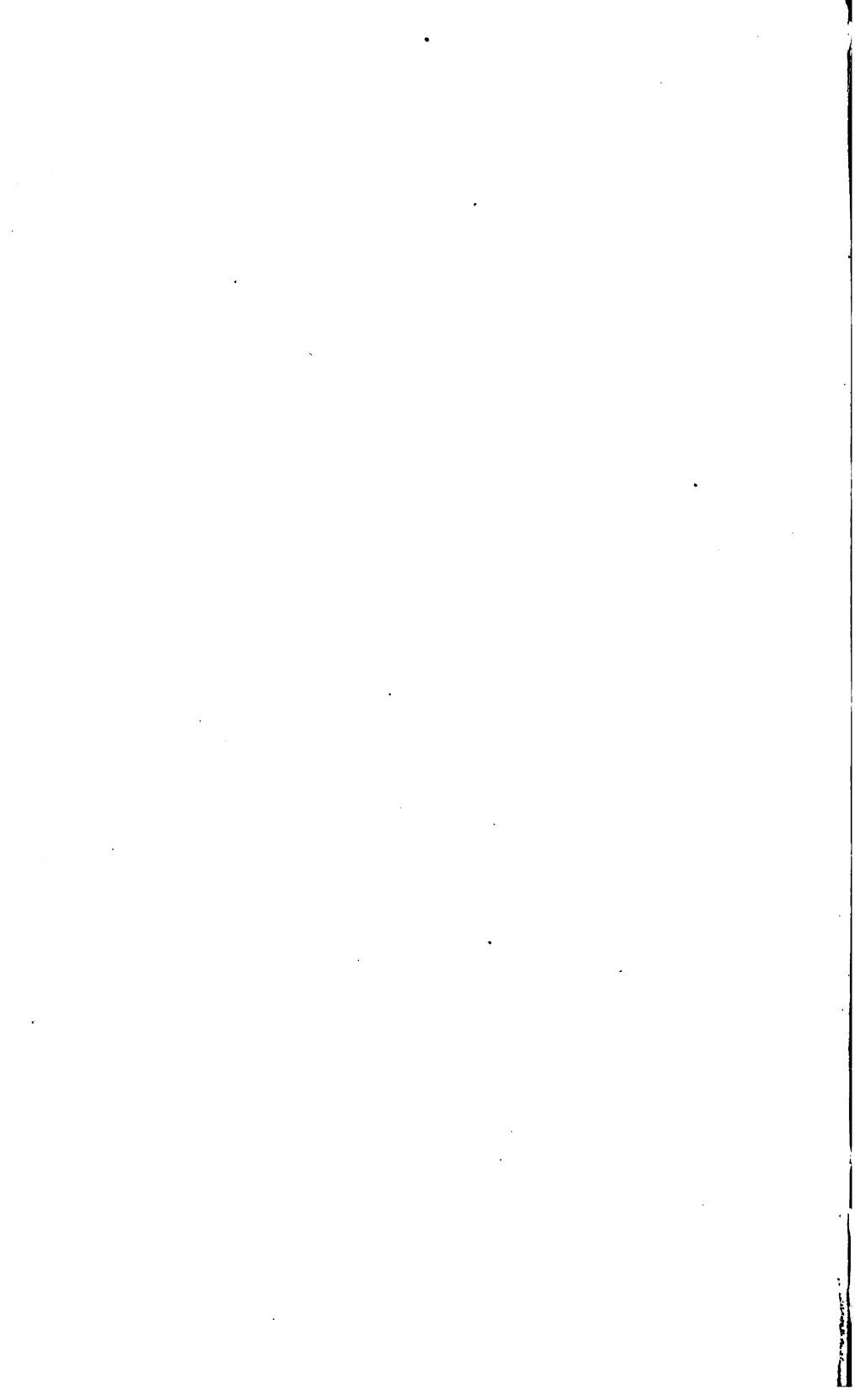


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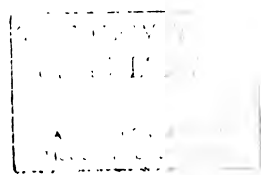
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[SEE PAGE 146.]

RAPE OF THE GAMP.

A Novel.

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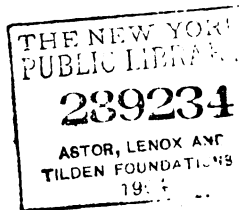
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RAPE OF THE GAMP.

CHAPTER I.

BOATS AND TEA-CUPS.

THE scene upon which our story opens is a calm, sun-lit reach of the pretty river Peddle, scarcely a mile above the ancient borough of Pedlington. On one side a wood of beech, alder, and willows slopes downward to the water's edge; on the other a few golden blossoms of the water-lily float dreamily beside a glistening rampart of rushes and arrow-headed reeds.

Two fair girls are making a preposterous attempt to propel a large pleasure-boat in the direction of the town. First one poises her light oar slowly on the rowlock, depressing the handle and elevating the blade, as if she were Ida Lewis or Grace Darling rowing in a heavy sea. Then down drops the blade into the smooth water, ever so deep, and up comes the handle to the young lady's forehead. At this inconvenient elevation she gives it a spasmodic twitch (if such a word there be; if not, *tant pis pour les mots*. No other word will express it). Out into the unresisting air flies the blade, with a great shower of spray, and back the damsel falls, with a pretty cry, between a laugh and a scream. Then this movement is fatuously imitated by the other nymph; but the boat, insensate and unimpressionable, probably on account of its lymphatic antecedents, declines to accelerate its pace. In short, it is stationary, or perversely gyrotory. But a fair youth, in charge of the steering apparatus, urges his blushing crew to renewed efforts in idiomatic English.

"Now, then, Janet!" the premature cynic cries; "flop yours in when Nelly's comes out. Bravo, Nelly! Do it again. You'll get there long before Janet. Jump out directly you get to the boat-house, and run home and tell them we're coming. Never say die, Janet! If Nelly *does* win the silver oar, you can pay for it, you know."

And so on, just as the fancy takes him. But to understand the latter morsel of encouragement administered to the elder of the two girls we want to be behind the scenes, and to know that Janet and her elder sister Blanche (now Mrs. George Baily, Jun.) are heiresses. An eccentric old bachelor, their godfather, had summarily disinherited his nephew before quitting this unsatisfactory world, and had bequeathed the bulk of his fortune to his "dear godchildren, Blanche and Janet, second and third daughters of Walter Browne, Esq., solicitor, of Pedlington."

Still there the boat is, stationary, or perversely gyrotory. And there the two young ladies are, one rich, the other poor; both passing merry, and persisting in their ludicrous attempt.

In the reach above, a pair of long blue-bladed oars are flashing in the sunlight. A keen outriggered boat is coming swiftly down the stream, when the gentleman plying the foremost oar (let us call him "Bow" for the moment) sings out,

"Ea-sy, Bedford! easy, my boy!"

And they both leave off rowing.

"My boy" is a man of Titanic proportions, muscular, bare-armed, bare-headed, with dense auburn locks clustering low down on his forehead and behind his ears.

The boat is gliding along too swiftly with its former impetus. Again Bow (a dark, active, wiry looking gentleman) assumes the command, this time in a lower tone.

"Back water!" he says. "We should spoil their frolic."

His friend also hears the merry laughter of the girls, and obeys at once, so that the boat is stopped, and a bend of the river keeps it out of sight of the boat below.

"Merrily, merrily carol the gales," says Bow, quoting the Laureate. "What sweet, ringing laughter!" Then a shade of sadness comes over his face, which is bright and



THE ROWING LESSON.

beaming with intellectual and moral energy, though dark and darkly bearded.

The shade of sadness seems to be in the air, for it falls also upon the face of the gentleman called Bedford, although his back is turned to his friend, in accordance with aquatic propriety. This man leans his dark red curly beard on the handle of his oar and listens moodily. Something more than a shade of sadness, something indescribable, which looks like a spasm of actual pain, flits across his bronzed face, leaving it motionless, colorless, statuesque.

Presently he rouses himself, and says, "Phelps, you really must leave off calling me Bedford. I feel, every time you say it, as if *that other dreadful word* were coming out. You must remember that I have been 'Mr. Lane' for eight or nine years now, in English lips; and until you came to Göttingen the other day I had never heard myself called Bedford since—since—"

But Mr. Lane got no further. At that little word "since" he seemed to encounter an insurmountable barrier, and fairly broke down.

"I will tutor myself into calling you 'Mr. Lane,'" said his friend. "But as yet, whenever I try, *vox faucibus hæsit*. It goes against the grain."

"But we discussed the subject, and you promised," said Mr. Lane.

"You mean," the other amended—"you mean that you proved to be intractable, and I yielded rather than forego your companionship."

"One more boon," Mr. Lane said, presently, as they still rested upon their oars. And it might have been noticed that suppliancy and dictation were strangely blended in the tone of his voice and the manner of his speech, as though he were so accustomed to command that he found it difficult to sue, and as though he were at once ashamed of his purpose and resolute to achieve it.

"Well?"

"I want you to treat me merely as a colleague, and not to speak openly about our old alliance."

"Well, yes," Bow assented, with less alacrity than resignation. "Yes, I certainly never made Mr. Lane's acquaintance till I ascended that crazy turret of yours in Göttingen."

As he spoke a faint breeze ruffled the surface of the stream, and then died away, leaving for a few moments an almost audible stillness, out of the very heart of which there presently broke a livid blaze of lightning and a great crash of thunder. The sky was now overcast. Again the preternatural stillness reigned for a few seconds; then large drops of rain fell rapidly, and the whole surface of the water became a tumultuous crowd of bubbles, bursting as soon as formed.

"Are you ready? Row on," cries Mr. Lane, impetuously, catching the turbid water with his eager blade. His companion is no less alert; and in a few seconds the light pair-oar overhauls the lumbering pleasure-boat, and Mr. Lane, extricating a huge umbrella (or rather *umbra*) from under his thwart, hands it to the two young ladies, who are just settling in the stern seat while their brother prepares to row.

A confused interchange of polite words passes between the two boats. Then the pair-oar glides swiftly and noiselessly away in the world of waters.

Rain falls like a cascade, and beats upon the big *umbra* with the sound of rolling drums.

"What a nice, large, funny old gingham umbrellas!" shrills Nelly, resting the butt end of the stout yellow stick on the seat between

her and Janet, and grasping it midway with both hands, so as to shelter her sister as well as herself.

Janet, pursing up her little mouth, sits mum, looking out into the rain and upon the river with vacant blue eyes.

Nelly, utterly regardless of her silent humor, rattled on gayly: "They must be the Siamese Twins, or the Corsican Brothers, at least. Did I ever see any thing so like!"

Her little joke consisted in the fact that the two gentlemen who had so gallantly come to the rescue were singularly unlike each other, one being dark and slender, the other ruddy and massive.

Still gazing out abstractedly into the falling and mingling waters, Janet answered, with some asperity,

"Nelly, don't be *redic'ulous*!"

"Yes, I shall," squeaked Nelly, nodding her head, and protruding the tip of her tongue from her pert little lips. "I *shall* be as ridiculous as I like. And how do you spell '*redic'ulous*,' pray? I never saw two such ogres. Did you, Berty? The Wandering Jew in front (if there can be any front and any back to such a spider of a boat)—the Wandering Jew, I say, did condescend to grin through his bristles. And I noticed that his beard was all on one side, too. I don't believe he has half as many bristles on one side as on the other. But as for the hero of this" (tapping the great yellow stick of the *umbra*), "did I ever see such a ferocious creature! Oh, if I were his wife, *shouldn't* I be glad to hear Hop-o'-my-thumb say, 'Ogress, Ogre can not come!'"

At this point Nelly broke out into peals of laughter. Had the elements been propitious, and gallants promenading the grassy margin of the river Peddle, one might have fancied she wished to captivate some swain by the glancing of her eyes and teeth, and the sweet coming and going of her dimples. But the only swain in sight was Hubert, her younger brother, and when did a younger brother experience raptures about a sister's charms? Without bestowing any attention upon her, he devoted his whole mind and body to his task.

Seeing Berty thus patiently toiling at his oars, and taking no part in the unseemly merriment, Janet relaxed a little.

"Who is he, dear?" she cried.

"Which?" he asked.

"Whichever you like," interposed Nelly.

"It's all the same."

"I wish you'd be quiet, Nelly," retorted

her sister, "and let me ask a question." Then, raising her voice, "I mean the gentleman who lent us the umbrella, dear."

Hubert left off rowing for a minute, and putting his wet hand to windward of his watery mouth, shouted, in a preternatural bass, "Carrotty one, the Marquis of Westminster; him rowing bow, Baron Rothschild. On a visit at Pool Park!"

As the babble of a stream and the whispering of aspen leaves fall mute in the roar of thunder, so the squeaking of Nelly and the prattle of Janet were hushed by this tremendous lie.

Hubert, rowing on triumphantly, and chuckling at their credulity, conveyed them through the squadron of small river craft which floats on the broad expanse of water at the foot of Pedlington Cliff, thence accompanied them home afoot, and, taking the *umbra* at the door, said to Janet, "It's saved your black silk. What message shall I give the marquis?"

But Janet, spying in the future a cloud of chaff, bounced into the house and up stairs disdainfully, with a great rustling of silken skirts. Nelly, waxing incredulous, turned on the threshold. "Hubert," she said, "you're not going all the way to Pool Park with that horrid old green thing!"

"Ain't it?" replied Hopeful; "and Isha'n't faint if the baron tips me a fiver, or the marquis invites me to Westminster Palace."

His audacity had carried him too far.

"Westminster Palace, indeed!" cried Nelly, on the door-mat. "Why, you poor silly boy, you *don't* think any body lives in Westminster Palace!"

Hubert, being fair-haired, fair-skinned, and *ingenui vultus*, turned and walked rapidly away to hide a blush. Taking the *umbra* back to the boat-house, he discovered the address of its owner, and carried it home. But Nelly scampered up stairs after Janet, whom she found, with bonnet and mantle cast aside, sitting on the bed, disconsolate.

Shutting the door, Nelly leaned her back against it, shaking herself and it with shrill laughter, and nothing dismayed by Janet's expression of countenance, which became more and more cross while that young lady reluctantly listened.

"When is she going to leave off cackling?" thought Janet to herself, tearing a kid glove to pieces on her lap.

But Nelly had her laugh out, took off her bonnet, and knelt down in front of Janet, making a little grimace of mock penitence.

Thus partially mollified, Janet stroked her sister's soft brown hair affectionately.

"Who is the baron, do you think?" Nelly asked, staring into Janet's eyes.

"I do know," was the pettish answer.

"Why, the Baron von Habenicht, a poor creature like me, who uses a cotton umbrella because it's cheaper than silk."

This was a touching appeal, because, while Janet was an heiress in a small way, poor Nelly was dependent on their father.

"If you want to know more, dear," she continued, "I believe I have seen him before, only with his coat and hat on; and I think he is the new head-master of the Grammar School."

"But the other one lent us the umbrella," said Janet.

"Oh yes," Nelly rejoined. "My lord marquis, with a rent-roll of nothing a year, and all his tenants in arrears. I shouldn't wonder if he turned out to be Dr. Phelps's friend and second master, Mr. Lane."

"I thought papa said *he* was a German?" suggested Janet.

"No, dear, an Englishman, who has been a professor of something, perhaps of the science of rowing spider boats, at a German university."

Nelly was right in both the conjectures, except as to the subject of Mr. Lane's profession, and in supposing he had actually attained to the professorial chair.

Now, although Janet kissed Nelly, and stroked and patted her head, yet there was a dreamy languor in her large blue eyes, and the corners of her little mouth were resolutely pulled down, spoiling the tiny Cupid's bow; so Nelly understood that her humor was solitary and uncommunicative, and departed to her own room.

Then Janet locked the door after her, kicked off a diminutive pair of boots, took out her hair-pins, shook her head, and a dense shower of amber tresses came waving and streaming down over breast and back and shoulders. So she sat down before her mirror, silent, shrouded, and impenetrable—a mystery to herself, to her family, and to all who knew her—rich, discontented, pampered, teased, flattered, peculiar Janet Browne.

Yet she can laugh and enjoy laughter; and at such times she likes to be in company, and in company likes funny people who know how to amuse her, but seldom goes beyond liking them; for Janet is not "gushing." Nor is she a flirt. If any combination of malign influences should here-

after make a flirt of her, she will be a dangerous one. Not sparkling on the surface with smiles and flattery, that exquisite delight which a woman can so easily confer upon a man, not defiant of conventionalities, nor given to those pretty imprudences which make a beautiful woman hated by her own sex and adored by men; but a flirt of the silent, prudent, watchful order—an enemy who seldom fires a gun, and never wastes powder. But why should we anticipate such formidable prowess for one who as yet has never fired a shot into the ranks of her admirers? Two or three rash young men have stolen a glance into the sapphire depths of her eyes, and felt unutterable things. One grave man of forty years, who has seen the women of many lands, has pronounced her peerless, and wished himself five-and-twenty for her sweet sake. But Janet is neither lavish of her glances nor fond of praise. If she is vain, hers is a subtle vanity. That affluence of tawny hair, which Edmund Spenser would have woven into a hundred sonnets, droops unheeded over a brow and neck and shoulders as white as swan's-down, cheeks tinted like a rose leaf, and the bust of Clytie. Knowing her beauty, she doubts its power for good or evil, and is neither proud of it nor happy on account of it. She knows that during the latter years of her childhood Blanche was undisputed belle of Pedlington, but that now the empire is at best divided between her and Nelly, while other pretenders are in the field. And why (she thinks) did Captain Lyte disinherit his nephew and leave half a fortune to *her*? It only makes things and people appear to her in a false light. She is never quite sure whether herself or the £12,000 forms the object of attraction. She has some compunctions, too, about that wicked young man. This is a subject of which she dare not speak. His name is forbidden. But did he really run away with poor Eleanor Baily (Blanche's sister-in-law)? Every one said that Captain Lyte had always disliked him because his mother had refused the captain, and married Mr. Lyte, a younger brother. Of this marriage a son had come, and the poor child, soon left an orphan, was sent by his uncle to the Bails, who had brought him up. Eventually he had quarreled with his uncle, and gone away. Soon afterward Eleanor Baily also disappeared; and it was received as proven that she was ruined by him. But the whole affair was wrapped in mystery. Janet had sound-ed her brother Frank, and could get no ev-

idence; and, strange as it will seem, it is a fact that this girl had a more legal and logical mind than her astute brother, and could not condemn this disinherited gallant at the bar of her own judgment without proof of his guilt. Moreover, two more feminine and romantic considerations induced Janet to entertain a sentiment of blended compassion and admiration for this unhappy man. In the first place, it must be recorded that she entertained a dislike, only qualified by contempt, for her brother-in-law, George Baily, Esq., Jun.; and much concurrent testimony certified her of the fact that when they were school-fellows at Harrow this young Lyte had inflicted upon young George Baily such a severe thrashing that it fell little short of manslaughter. She knew, or thought she knew, that George Baily's unkindness to his sister had been the secret cause of the animosity between Lyte and him; and she strongly suspected that her sister Blanche was not happy with Mr. George, who, she believed, had married her for the sake of her portion under Captain Lyte's will. The next item in her tender compassion for the disinherited man was founded upon this fact: a few months after the disappearance of Miss Baily, Sir Thomas Balbry, an Irish baronet who had paid her conspicuous attentions, died abroad, and a first report that he had encountered an accident while riding had been gradually but surely superseded by a dark rumor that he had received his death-wound in an encounter with young Mr. Lyte. Janet, pandering on these things in her silent way, and believing that every other member of her family was too prejudiced to direct her mind aright, concluded that whether the fault was his or not (and she doubted if it was), still there must have been something noble about the young man who first chastised a brother, and then killed a lover, for the sake of the girl he loved.

However these things might be, Janet was discontented with her lot, with her fortune, with herself. Oh, how she would like to go somewhere, and be of some use in the world—to be a nursery governess, or to found a charitable institution, or to be one of Miss Nightingale's aides-de-camp, or any thing but odious, useless little Janet Browne! But was it quite impossible that life should change for her, should become quite a different thing to her, without a change of place or station? This afternoon a wild thought came into her head, a new feeling into her heart. A sentiment too vague with inex-

pressible delight filled all the channels of her being for a few blissful moments. And in this gloom and silence of her chamber, only broken by the beating of the rain upon her windows, that feeling lived again, and all the little incidents that heralded and followed it passed and repassed through the mirage of her mind: the falling of the breeze, the blaze of lightning, and the crash of thunder; a few rain-drops in the river, then more and quicker, till the wild shower thickened round her, in the midst of which a measured pulse of oars unseen came upon her swiftly from the unseen world; then a shock, a space of sweet bewilderment; then the gloom of the umbrella, the loud drumming of the rain upon it, and the plash, plash, plash, drip, drip, drip all around. In this solitude and amazement of the heart came another, an unpleasant shock—Hubert's fatal answer, "The Marquis of Westminster!" How angry she felt, with all the pettiness of every-day life closing around her, and chaff gathering cloud-like on the horizon!

But now the rain beats upon her darkened window, the gloom deepens round her, and the same scene repeats itself: a falling of the breeze, a darkening of the sun, a roll of distant thunder; rain-drops plashing in the water, the rapid swing and beat of oars unseen coming swiftly toward her, the quickening of her pulse, the beating of her heart—

Suddenly a loud knocking at the door interrupts her meditations. "Tea! tea!" shouts Hubert, and hurries away to satisfy the claims of hunger.

Gathering her fulvous fleece together, Janet ties it in a hasty knot at the back of her comely head, sponges her face and hands with cold water, and without lighting a candle or looking in the glass, marches solemnly down to tea.

Joan is presiding at the tray. Joan is permanently "sore" that Captain Lyte should have selected Blanche and Janet, though they were his godchildren, and left her and Nelly out in the cold. She used to be particularly severe on Blanche's faults, and now keeps a watchful eye on Janet. Joan is the eldest sister, five-and-thirty, beak-nosed, thin-lipped, with dark hair primly braided and pinned close to the head. Surveying Janet as she enters, Joan glances round at the company assembled, and smiles sardonically. The story of that green cotton umbrella has already gone the round,

and has even received sundry emendations and various readings. The family Vehmgericht have been discussing Janet's temper, her love of solitude and brooding, her peculiarity and impenetrability. Albert, the charitable, has just wound up as follows: "Well, she's a rum girl, and we none of us understand her. That's the long and the short of it." Albert is the eldest son (about thirty), prematurely old, bald-headed, contemplative, and idle.

"A most becoming way of 'doing' your hair, dear!" says sister Joan, handing Janet a cup of tea.

"Really, my dear," Mrs. Browne adds, smiling, "I think you *might* pay a little more attention to your toilet."

Mr. Browne, who, though presiding, has been a silent member of the Vehmgericht, now looks up from the *Quarterly Review*, smiling also. "The truth is," he says, "you're envious of Janet's golden locks, all of you."

"Golden!" exclaims sister.

"I wish I were as bald as Albert," says Janet, angrily.

"Ahem!" coughs Albert.

Frank, next to whom Janet has seated herself, whispers in her ear, "You'd have to wear a false plait, like Joan, if you were." Frank is the handsome second brother, himself partially bald, satirical, and languid, but keeping a vigilant eye open, and a clear head for business.

The bit of malice about Joan's doubtful tresses puts Janet in good humor. "More tea, please, dear," she says, handing her cup to Joan. *Mais il n'y a pas de rose sans épine*; and Frank, going to the table and cutting a piece of bread, drawls out, "Oh, by-the-way, Janet; Hubert took back the parachute, and found the baron with his feet in a tub of hot water, and the Marquis of Westminster drinking a treacle posset."

"The Marquis of Fiddlestick," says Nelly, stamping her little foot on the ground, and then laughing with exquisite *abandon*.

This interruption of Nelly's is a relief to Janet. After all, matters are not so bad as fancy painted them. The umbrella was lent to Nelly as well as to her. The marquis and the baron, as they call them, are evidently not formidable, and if not, why—why—in short, there is no occasion for her to give herself airs and provoke suspicion. So she too laughs and blushes, as any young lady might do, hearing of gentlemen sitting and drinking possets, with their feet in tubs of water.

A stranger would notice that Albert, the charitable, is covertly watching his sister Janet with a curious attention. He has quite a habit of silently watching other people's thoughts and feelings; and unknown to his family is often behind the scenes when they are all in the dress circle. But, being inactive, he seldom makes use of his discoveries, and gains little credit for his penetration. Yet his good nature frequently induces him to create a diversion just at the right moment; and unconsciously his brothers and sisters, and even his parents, have learned to rely upon him for changing a disagreeable subject. Now a general feeling pervades the room that the story of the umbrella has gone far enough. So Albert clears his throat gallantly for a speech, and says, "I'll tell you what it is. If you girls keep going out without an umbrella this showery weather, you'll decimate the aristocracy."

"I wish some benefactor of his species would decimate the Brownes of Pedlington, beginning with the eldest son," draws Frank.

Frank's witticisms are small, but very neat. The Browne family at that time consisted of Mrs. and Mr. Browne, four sons, and four daughters; so that the removal of any one member would exactly "decimate the Brownes of Pedlington."

Again Janet smiles approval. You see there is nothing angelic about our little heroine: But ill-used Albert, on whom the hot tea is having its usual effect, only wipes his bald head with a white cambric handkerchief, and pushes his chair back toward the open door.

CHAPTER II.

HIGH AND DRY.

WALTER BROWNE, Esq., of Pedlington, solicitor, or "Old Browne with the pretty daughters," as the men at the cavalry dépôt and the young gentlemen in the surrounding country used to call him, was high and dry. The younger son of a small country gentleman in an agricultural county, he had been nursed in the very lap of Conservatism—none of your new-fangled philosophical Diz-zibright Toryism, but "fine old English" church and state Conservatism. After such a training in polite letters as the Pedlington Grammar School could afford, he was articled

to an old-fashioned firm of conveyancers and Conservative election agents in that town. From clerk to head of the firm he had worked his way through the grades, and won golden opinions in every grade, from the time when "*omnes omnia bona dicere et laudare fortunam*"—i. e., when every body used to compliment—his father on his ability, till the time when the lord-lieutenant of the county assured him it was with the deepest regret that he was unable to nominate so estimable a gentleman to the clerkship of the peace, as the late lord-lieutenant had promised the nomination several years previously to Mr. Delavine. In the fruitful soil of Pedlington Mr. Browne had struck deep root, weathered storm and sunshine, and spread branches fair to look upon. Winds of doctrine might (and did) vary; ocean currents of opinion might (and did) set in and sway the surges round him; but he bent not to the storm, nor trembled at the mighty sea. Only the lichen of many years coated him over; byssus grew upon his chin; and as all things changed around him, and he remained unchanged, there was a tinge of sadness in his isolation.

Albert, the prematurely bald-headed, contemplative son, saw this. He doted on his father, and revered his opinions, contrasting them with the more fluctuating and volatile sentiments in vogue, just as a lover of honest port-wine will condemn the vintages of Bordeaux and Johannisberg. Still he saw plainly enough that Bordeaux and Rhine wine were the beverages of the day, and he drew comfort from this consideration, "The good old opinions will last his time and mine: after us let Frank and the young world do their will." He had little faith in his brother's loyalty to the venerable code, though in reality Frank's liberalism never extended beyond the precipitate purchase of a broad-brimmed felt hat and a dozen "turn-down" or Byronic collars. It was a sad thought, that of burying their talents in graves of the past, and leaving no heritage for the future—sorry life work. Possibly it may have been this that saddened Albert's life. Doubtless it imbibed his father's also; but the old man was too proud to show it; his combativeness was in continual though unostentatious play, and that very opposition of opinion which gave the offense warded off melancholy by keeping his energies in active use.

Yet, far from being disputations or given to argument in social intercourse, Mr. Browne

was one of those men of whom one does meet a specimen now and then—men who seem independent of sympathy, and who seek no real intercourse out of their family, and little in it. His opinions and sentiments (if he ever admitted so delicate a creature) were classified petrifications, requiring no warm contact of living thought and feeling. If from his professional experience, or from any literary source, he drew and made his own one more opinion, it was petrified and classified at once, so that he rather resembled a geologist's cabinet than the living, moving, sympathetic world of which every man should be a type. In the family circle and in general society, though not seeking it, he was courteous and even cheerful, seldom speaking without a smile which exhibited his whole system of artificial teeth. But what little he said on such occasions was invariably on a subject of mere ephemeral interest, or of none at all. Though politely disguising it with smiles, he would conceive a hearty dislike for any Sir Malaprop who pressed him with conversation on a debatable subject, especially if he was worsted in argument, or his position was regarded with scorn in the hearing of his own wife or children. The latter offense he never could be prevailed upon to forgive. His only friend since boyhood had been his quondam crony and school-fellow, the late Captain Lyte, of the Royal Navy, an eccentric Tory of what was lately called "the Sibthorpe school," in whose society Mr. Browne had doubtless tasted the insidious gratification of being considered a liberal-minded and progressive politician.

Captain Lyte's Toryism, however, had not compelled him to adhere faithfully to the spirit of his father's last will and testament. On the contrary, having been informed by his solicitors, Messrs. Baily, Blythe, and Baily, of London, that the deed in question was faulty, he set it aside on his own authority as heir at law, and made a new disposition of the property, leaving one moiety of it to his sister Philadelphia, and the other to be divided equally between his dear godchildren Blanche and Janet Browne. It must be stated here parenthetically, and in justice to the good Pedlingtonian lawyer, that he was entirely ignorant of this transaction until after the captain's death, and that in drawing the marriage settlement of his daughter Blanche he had made no provision or condition for securing this unexpected treasure.

Walter Browne, Esq., regularly perused the *Quarterly Review*, and daily skimmed the cream of Conservative journalism. But he disliked the modern spasmodic writers, whose style affected his sense of literary propriety much as the jaunty whistling of an errand-boy jars on the cultivated ear of a musician. Hume and Clarendon were his models of English prose, Pope his model poet. His novels were those of Sir Walter Scott. Grave English classics filled the lower shelves of his book-case; nor was his acquaintance with these limited to the titles on their backs.

Such a man was not one to be deficient in will or in the exercise of authority. Absolute master in his own house, he prudently abstained from interference with petty details, but settled all general questions with a decision against which there was no appeal.

To Frank and to Robert (the military brother) there seemed nothing melancholy in the isolation of fixed opinions. They thought it inevitable that radical views should gain ground in a populous borough; but the counties they regarded as strongholds of "fine old English" constitutional policy. The firm of Browne and Son had their stake planted firmly in the county. Its sturdy principal took care that he himself, each of his three adult sons, and each of his four Conservative clerks should be duly qualified and registered voters for the county. The whole firm regarded the Reform Bill of 1832 as the Moors in their gradual expulsion from Spain looked back upon the fall of Granada. But the past was irrevocable: the counties, a score of pocket boroughs, and a forlorn hope of loyal hearts still remained.

As to free trade, what good had it done? Weakened the agricultural interest, and enriched a legion of foreign traders. The country had grown more wealthy, it was said; that is to say, some thousands of hucksters and cotton spinners had amassed fortunes, and were doing all that unfamiliar wealth and mushroom growth could do to upset the state coach. Free trade had struck at the root of the tree of English grandeur. And if it must be admitted that more land was in the market and conveyancing more brisk than formerly, on the other hand, radical solicitors, men of equivocal integrity and subversive opinions, were springing up in all directions. In short, Peel was a renegade, "Lord John" a crazy demagogue, all recent

legislation a nuisance, and modern Solons busybodies who couldn't leave well alone. The County Court, too, was a contemptible little innovation. But the Brownes objected to it "on principle." It scarcely interfered at all with them. The firm were conveyancers and agents for the purple county candidates. W. Browne, Esq., was clerk to the county magistrates, clerk to the Board of Guardians, to the turnpike trust, the county lunatic asylum, and so forth. From such sources a fair professional income was derived, and the Reform Bill could scarcely bear the blame if Mr. Browne chose to bring up his boys and girls as young gentlemen and ladies.

On the whole, legal Frank and military Robert took a cheerful view of matters. It is only your dreamy, speculative Alberts who are melancholy. Robert had fought in India, and "lived to fight another day." Now, being adjutant of his regiment, he had the belts and pipe-clay to look after. Famously he did look after these small matters, too. H.R.H. the Commander-in-Chief had complimented him on the field of battle (a sham fight at Chobham), and his corps was the envy of a whole camp. Frank had plenty of office work and "vice work," as he called it, that is, acting for his father in one or other of the clerkships. Besides which, in his favorite character of a gay Lothario, he usually had one (or more) flirtation on hand; he devoted more time to his toilet than Janet did; and, as became a domestic, amiable member of polite society, had no objection to taking his ease in the bosom of his family, finding relaxation in the superintendence of little household broils, and animating the war of persiflage.

In matters connected with religion a strong family likeness prevailed between the four brothers. From Albert the bald to Hubert the fair-haired, one rule was law. In the morning and afternoon of Sundays they went regularly to church, wet or dry; in the morning of Christmas-day and of Good-Friday also; but on no consideration at any other time. For a wedding, indeed, they would repair to the sacred edifice; but in the true spirit of church and state Conservatism they regarded the holy table as a "hy-meneal altar," and the whole ceremony as an entertaining performance merely subsidiary to the civil contract of marriage. Hitherto they had acquired no experience of the funeral rite. One brother had died of phthisis at the Cape of Good Hope, but the news

of his death only came when his burial was a vague legend of the past. During the services of prayer and praise one look of importance reigned on the countenances of the four brothers; a religious silence commanded their tongue and lips. During the sermon they all gazed about the church, relieving the monotony of the occasion by sifting the behavior of their fellow-sufferers, and storing appropriate winnowings of chaff. Albert, Robert, and Hubert throughout service and sermon sat bolt-upright; Frank languished in graceful attitudes.

Between the sisters also a similar family likeness prevailed, especially between the three beauties, Blanche (now Mrs. George Baily, of Russell Square, Bloomsbury), Janet, whose face and fortune divided the Pedlingtonian hearts, and Nelly, whose face was her fortune. On "church days" the whole family used to produce its gala costumes. The girls used to lace extra tight, wear crackling silk dresses, marvelously small boots, and enormous bows of stiff silk ribbon under their little chins and cheeks; so that they had to carry their heads uncomfortably high, and to sit bolt-upright, like the military brother. The tight fit of their lavender kid gloves precluded any possibility of turning over the leaves of their prayer-books, or indeed of allowing their hands to assume any comfortable position. "*O, qu'il faut souffrir pour être belle!*" exclaimed Robert, who in his rare visits behaved with gallantry to these devoted virgins. But Frank ingeniously observed that they sat trussed like a row of chickens on a spit. Owing to the rigidity of this costume, and the absence of any particular interest in what was going on, these victims were tired out before the service was ended, and the endurance of the sermon was the crowning effort of their lives. In the retirement of the family circle it was whispered that Blanche, in the zenith of her glory, had lost the affections of an heir by relaxing this effort on one sultry occasion, and betraying the dreadful secret that a belle may snore.

Browne (*paterfamilias*)—and I beg the reader to observe that we now reach a climax—Mr. Browne himself was sedately splendid at church. He wore a blue swallow-tailed coat, of which the collar covered his whole cerebellum, while the cuffs of the sleeves confined the action of his thumbs. At stated intervals he blew his nose with a voluminous and variegated silk pocket-handkerchief, thus making a superb display of

color, and producing a resonant blast, like that of a bugle. This instrument in its period of rest gratified those who worshiped behind Mr. Browne by depending from the tail of his coat like a flag in calm weather. As Mr. Browne rarely blew his nose except at church and Petty Sessions, the "trumpet performance," as Frank called it, was considered by the family, and justly so, as a very appropriate and imposing part of the ceremony.

The religious duties of the younger Brownes were clearly defined and emphatically laid down by the elder. In his or her fourteenth year each of them was confirmed by the venerable primate of the English Church, as their forefathers had been since the Reformation; for both Mr. Browne's native parish and the borough of Pedlington lay within the limits of the archdiocese of Canterbury. As each succeeding Easter-Sunday came round, all the confirmed Brownes "staid the sacrament," and on no other occasion. The Brownes of Brownleigh and Farfield had done so from time immemorial, and the Brownes of Pedlington would continue the good old custom, let the clergyman of the district for the time being think and say what he would. One had beaten the "pulpit-drum ecclesiastic" for a few years who wanted no one to "stay" but hysterical penitents. Then another came who wanted every one to "stay" always, children and all. Now Mr. Marmaduke was sorely "exercised" on the subject, and didn't know what he wanted, but was more eager and urgent than those who did. It was all one to Mr. Browne. *Fiat* his good old custom, *ruat* parsondom.

In this well-regulated family no nonsense was ever uttered about week-day services, district visiting, Sunday-school teaching, Dorcas meetings, or prayer-meetings. Sermons were tacitly understood to be specimens of pious oratory, and only tolerable as such. A close scrutiny into the religious feelings or experience of any member of the family will scarcely seem to have been possible; yet once or twice, before the primate's visitation, such a thing was attempted by some overzealous curate, who was at once and forever forbidden the house. The temptation to make such a pretty convert must have been quite irresistible. But the requital was justice with a vengeance; for to have access to the Maison Browne was universally considered the blue ribbon of Pedlington society. Many a friend clave unto Frank, many a bottle of Moët Imperial (before the

French treaty), and many a choice Cabafia cigar did Albert the contemplative enjoy at the cost of "impassioned youth" for the faint prospect of a smile from his sisters' lips.

So that, "on the whole" (this was a favorite expression with Frank Browne) — "on the whole," the Brownes, without any deep interest in life or any high moral purpose (in short, "without any humbug," as Frank aptly paraphrased it)—the Brownes of Pedlington were "a thoroughly respectable, happy, and united family."

CHAPTER III.

GEMINI.

THE two gentlemen whom Hubert had dubbed with illustrious names and titles would themselves have been slow to acknowledge the honor done to them. Not that they were disaffected to existing social distinctions, but simply that they belonged to the aristocracy of intellect, and appreciated the honors of their own class too highly to covet those of another. They were, indeed, Mr. Phelps (or Dr. Phelps, as the local newspapers called him in virtue of the cabalistic letters LL.D. affixed to his name), and his coadjutor Mr. Lane. The former had recently been appointed to his office by the Mayor and Corporation of Pedlington. He had conferred the inferior dignity of second master on his old friend and school-fellow. The contest for the recently vacant head-mastership had been a brisk one, and some of its details, which had since reached the ears of Mr. Phelps, caused much amusement to the two friends. The *Southeastern Gazette and Pedlington Advertiser* had trumpeted the intentions of the town council to the four corners of the realm. "No longer," it had written, "should the youth of their enlightened and conservative borough have to wander in search of education. A loyal and liberal municipality should cherish as the nucleus of its future greatness an institution in which the revered learning of antiquity and the advanced principles of our age might be inculcated and matured."

Cloudy phrases often obscure a clear purpose. In this case the burghers, who had long groaned under the incubus of an inefficient school-master for their sons, were resolved to have the best one they could get, whatever his politics or religious sentiments might be. Accordingly the town-clerk is-

sued his advertisement, in which the aldermen sternly refused to be canvassed, or to take into consideration any thing but the relative fitness of the several candidates as set forth in their testimonials.

Sixty candidates rushed into the arena, and, as a matter of course, every one of the electors was briskly canvassed. In the little world of British school-masters, among whom such advertisements are discussed, it was broadly stated that effective management would soon draw a hundred boys to the Pedlington Grammar School. The capitation fee was advertised at six guineas for each boy. It was also probable that in such a wealthy and populous town from thirty to fifty boarders might soon drop in, at fifty guineas a year; so that the head-master's income could scarcely fall below £2000 a year. There was also a small endowment both for head and second master's salary, and an excellent house and garden for the former. But the burghers, just and tenacious of their purpose, hearkened not to the voice of the canvasser.

One hot morning in the merry month of May they assembled in awful conclave. The town-clerk sorted his papers. To his Worship he delivered sixty pamphlets, to each one of their Dignities sixty pamphlets, declaring each and every one of the said nine hundred treatises to be a true and accurate printed copy of authentic documents then in his keeping.

Every man regarded solemnly the mass of literature before him. SIXTY PAMPHLETS! fifty-nine of which were terrible to behold and bewildering to peruse, each containing many elaborate panegyrics on the character of one of the candidates.

Civic dignitaries are not invariably men of a literary or critical turn of mind. Knowing as these men did the frailty of human nature, it was hard for them to credit mortals with the surpassing excellence attributed to each candidate, impossible to discern between varieties of perfection. Summer was premature. The council-chamber was small and ill ventilated. The thermometer rose to eighty. The wisdom of the councillors was set at naught.

In this extremity, as the worthy men sat mopping their foreheads ruefully, each glancing at his neighbor only to see his own despair imaged in another face, first one, then another, then all, began to inspect the sixtieth pamphlet, that one which had the advantage of brevity. And now the furtive

glances revealed a glimmer of hope to those who glanced. This tract contained copies of two documents only, one signed by the authorities of a well-known college in Oxford, the other by my lords of the Privy Council. At length each elector wrote a name on a slip of paper, folded it mysteriously, and passed it on to the town-clerk; and the next morning Henry Phelps, Esq., M.A., LL.D., formerly a fellow of — College, Oxford, and late one of her Majesty's inspectors of schools, received a polite note from that functionary, saying that he had been elected unanimously to the mastership of their old endowed school.

Thus it happened, to the horror and discomfort of many reverend gentlemen who had sought and obtained holy orders as a stepping-stone to scholastic preferment, that a layman was chosen for one of those offices which in England are almost invariably filled by a priest, and the nomination to which rested in the hands of men upright and disinterested, but who usually are slaves to precedent, and tremble at a divergence from the beaten track.

Both Mr. Phelps and his friend looked older than their years, and yet about them both hung a kind of youthfulness, the kind which attracts and fascinates boys, and which is the growth of real vigor united to kindness of nature. Each of them had *lived*, and one at least had *loved*. Phelps had been captain of a public school, fellow and classical lecturer of a college, a husband, a father, an inspector. Mr. Lane had been his friend's rival and competitor at school, but had since graduated at two German universities, had become a moderately good linguist, a geologist, and something of a chemist. A rare combination of chances (as we say) had reunited them now. Mr. Phelps, having resigned his fellowship in order to marry, had afterward resigned his office as inspector to give a delicate wife more of his company than he could otherwise have done. To replace the lost occupation he then undertook to write a treatise on the sources and structure of the English language. This soon drove him beyond his modern German, and urged him to acquire some knowledge of the semi-Saxon. About this time a heavy calamity befell him, and he was left a widower and childless at one blow. Partly to carry out his previous intention, and so distract his mind from its proper grief, and partly to get what solace he could in the society of a friend, Phelps then repaired to

Germany, and found Mr. Lane chewing the cud of bitterness over one of those minor evils which supply us with misery in the absence of real woes. For two or three years past he had been acting assistant professor of modern languages at an important centre of education, and his senior being infirm and aged, a large proportion of the work had devolved upon him. Recently the professor had died, and Mr. Lane, who was exceedingly popular with the students, not unnaturally anticipated his election to the vacant chair. The governing body, however, had passed him over in favor of a man whom he thought less qualified, and with less claim upon them. *Hinc illa lacryma.* In these cases it is only for honor and position that an Englishman competes. The full emolument of that professorship in the oldest university in Europe was pecuniarily of less value than the modest salary which Mr. Phelps offered his friend.

"I'm glad they have served you so badly," said Phelps, when Mr. Lane had poured out the story of his wrongs.

"How so?" asked Lane.

Then Phelps unfolded his project that Mr. Lane should return with him at the end of their vacation, and take a humble desk in the Grammar School. At first Lane thought the scheme wild and chimerical. "It is quite impossible." There were powerful reasons why such a step might prove to have been rash and ill advised, bringing humiliation on himself and injury to Phelps. But the latter assured him that he had weighed the whole matter carefully in his mind, and saw just as powerful reasons in its favor as Mr. Lane saw against it.

"How passing strange it is that fate should have guided your steps to Pedlington, of all places in the world!" said Mr. Lane, half to Phelps, half musing aloud.

"It is a call for you, Bedford, depend upon it. I am only an agent in the matter. I see events co-operating toward an end. And think what a comfort you will be to me."

"I fear not, my boy. The iron has entered into my soul."

"And not into mine?" asked Phelps.

Then Mr. Lane stood before him, looking at him with the old love-light in his eyes. They clasped hands, and the bargain was thus mutely struck between them. But the facts of the case more than justified all Mr. Lane had said. It did seem impossible to one who knew the secret of his life that he should settle safely in that English town. It was very strange that circumstances

should have induced Phelps to take up his abode there. And the iron of grief had entered into Mr. Lane's soul, and rusted there like a blood-stained sword in its scabbard.

The two men had loved each other very dearly as boys. Perhaps their very competition in scholarly pursuits, and the generous rivalry which had existed between them, may have urged them to bestow more affection on each other than boys generally have to bestow. The rivalry between them had been very keen, and in my capacity as chronicler I may express an opinion that if Phelps had lost, the bitter would have drowned the sweet in his feeling toward his friend. But Phelps won, and the other lad, though burdened with a whole load of faults from which Phelps was free, was yet too generous, too massive in heart as in mould, to cherish a spark of malice. I believe he rejoiced in Phelps's triumph as sincerely as if it had been his own. Had he then remained in England and completed his education at Oxford, most likely the two friends would have occupied chambers together after their university course was over, and pursued their studies together or shared a common industry. The severance of their early bond left Mr. Phelps free to love and marry. The earthly close of that union of his had again given scope for the early friendship to revive and resume its functions in his life.

Yet a bond renewed is not a bond which has never been relaxed; and although human truth and constancy rebel at the assertion, it is a fact that marriage relaxes the bond of friendship between man and man. These two men still trusted each other with a singular confidence, and still felt a cordial satisfaction in each other's society; yet they were not the *Gemini* of old times, so named by their school-fellows from the close intimacy which bound them together, rendered more noticeable by their unlikeness in externals. Between them now lay a mysterious gulf, the presence of which both felt, but neither quite understood. Mr. Lane laid the blame of it on himself, declaring that he had been the first to put that gulf between his friend and him, to divide their life, as it were. Nor was that all. In the first flush of manhood, and in the first blazing out of youthful passion, he had not been true to their ideal standard. This much he admitted to himself only. But he also dimly suspected (and would not admit to himself) that his friend was somewhat dwarfed in moral stature by a certain intellectual pride which

seemed to grow out of him, and yet to adhere to him and to restrict his nobler parts. Whenever this suspicion took form it was a source of sincere grief to Mr. Lane, who esteemed his friend as the noblest of created beings, and at the same time had seen through the sham dignity of pride, and learned to know that humility is the true touch-stone, the real test, of moral grandeur.

Nor had their intercourse during those long years of separation been close enough for each to feel the pulse of the other's progress in thought and feeling. Upon all questions relating to revealed religion the difference between them, though as yet unspoken, was sure to make itself felt. Mr. Lane, after rebelling against the lessons of his childhood, and passing through various phases of rationalism and unbelief, was returning to a simple faith, and becoming "catholic", in a theological sense of the word. Mr. Phelps, growing more and more dissatisfied with all dogmatic expressions of faith, was advancing rapidly toward the conclusion that no satisfactory key to the mysteries of the spirit world had yet been vouchsafed to the human mind. But Mr. Phelps took the blame to himself, and said that he had never understood his friend's stronger physical organization, with its precipitate impulses, nor appreciated the manifold simplicity of his nature. He accused himself of egotism and an excess of refinement, and in his own heart paid a certain homage to his Herculean friend, as one of a grander, more simple type than himself—one whose strength was not as his strength, but who had yet in boyhood pressed him hard upon his own ground; as a man of whom it would be impossible to say what he might *not* do, but safe to predict energetic action in whatever he undertook. That Bedford had sown his wild oats Mr. Phelps was quite sure; further, that the seed had been sown deep in a tenacious soil, and the crop a stiff one. Some clew to the circumstances he held in his hand, but was too generous to use it as long as his friend maintained this unbroken silence respecting an unhappy epoch in his life. Taking him as he found him on the renewal of their personal intercourse, Mr. Phelps concluded philosophically that, whatever his friend's experience had been, it was the fitting complement of his character and the trying position in which he had been placed; that, with past experience become present wisdom, this man exercised a stronger control over circumstances than they upon him; and

that, his heart being sound and his will strong, he would exert a healthy moral influence in a school, and his work would be thoroughly done.

CHAPTER IV.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER.

IF Mr. Phelps had not clearly recognized before he applied for the mastership of the Pedlington school that work, hard work, and plenty of it, was absolutely necessary to prevent him from falling into a desponding lethargy, and that no other drudgery whatever could surpass the ineffable drudgery of an inspectorship, he might have been tempted to complain somewhat in his new set of harness. But having made up his mind on those two cardinal points, he omitted no effort now to enter into the spirit of the task which he had undertaken, and Happiness (of a sedate and sober kind) came to him toiling along the path of duty, as she will not come to those who scour the country undutifully in her quest. The school was not long in establishing such a number of urgent and conflicting appeals to his attention, judgment, and industry that the progress of the literary work during term time was almost entirely suspended. With a sigh he resigned himself to the inexorable machinery which he himself had set in motion, and to regarding his own powers and achievements as a portion of the system whose operation he directed and had the means of estimating. All men of critical faculty delight in any labor which they can test and weigh as it progresses, line by line, and page by page. Perhaps that is one of the fascinations of the "*ars poetica*." I do not mean the poem of that name, nor even the epic art itself, but the art of composing lyrical verses. Every ode or sonnet, every stanza, every line almost, is "something done." How widely different is the gyratory *manège* of school work! The most fiery Pegasus must be curbed, and harnessed to a ponderous hearse, which bears the dead bodies of Fancy and Humor to an untimely grave. Alas! poor innocents! Once they warmed the heart with joy, and sent the goose-quill flying over airy leaves, like a nautilus dancing on sun-lit waves. Now they lie low, smothered by the jealous hands of Duty, who piles upon them concords and quantities, gerunds and supines, genders, moods, and tenses, numbers

and persons, till they die; and Pegasus, smeared with ink, spavined, broken-winded, with drooping crest, and a hearse plume tied to his mangy tail, drags their disfigured remains to the cemetery of oblivion.

As long as "the Doctor" (for so parents and boys alike conspired to call him) could fully carry out his preconceived idea of letting the boarders live with him on the paternal or family plan, he was well satisfied, because he was really so fond of young people that it was refreshing to him to be in their company both in their leisure hours and during the evening study, which was not a "regulation" school time. A system apparently rigid and exacting both as to work and behavior was pursued in the normal school hours. Neither the Doctor nor Mr. Lane ever relaxed an inch or took off the weight of one feather. But more regard was held to the quality than to the quantity of work done, and mere priggish decorum was not stuck up to be a model of generous and honorable conduct. The severity of the system "in school" was so tempered by affection and confidence "out of school" that the sensible boys soon learned to like the former, and really found it much easier to put their shoulders to the wheel (intellectually) when every boy in the room was exerting his wits to the utmost, when the very atmosphere was impregnated with classic dust, and a code of rules, simple but emphatic, was being enforced to the letter as to externals. The Doctor had not embraced the modern opinion that corporal punishment disgraces a boy. It was a part of his system, but a subordinate part. A third repetition of any offense on the part of the same boy was visited with the cane, a fourth with the loss of a half-holiday, a fifth with that loss extended to the whole class. This terrible event looming in the distance so enlisted public opinion on behalf of law that a besetting sin was generally resisted in its early stages. The subordination of the cane to a more grave punishment also robbed it of its "shameful" stigma, and avoided making brute force the ultimate appeal, which is undoubtedly demoralizing. Whether good, bad, or indifferent, the method pursued by the Doctor and Mr. Lane gave satisfaction on all hands, and sons of burghers who had been scattered broadcast all over the country were now brought back to their native town, and sent to the Grammar School either as day scholars, day boarders, or boarders. They soon had seventy in school, twenty-

two of whom lived with the head-master. Then it became necessary to increase the staff, to which Phelps was very loath. He wished for an intruder neither between him and his saturnine colleague, nor between himself and his little boy family of an evening and in play hours. He confided this to Mr. Lane, who knew it well, and what more was in his mind, but made no suggestion.

"If you would only come now, Bedford," urged the Doctor, who had often expressed the wish before, but not recently. And then again, "If you would only leave that dismal old abbey and that damp river-side churchyard, and come and pitch your tent with me, we could work it well enough. The senior monitor can take the evening study, and you might have almost as much time to yourself as you have now. Only we could sit together of an evening in the winter, or take a stretch over the hills together in the long summer twilights. I know you keep late hours all alone there. I see those black hollows deepening round your eyes. You are too much alone."

But Mr. Lane declined the proposal, and a third master was engaged, a younger brother of one of Phelps's college friends, who wanted to work for a year or two before matriculating.

A certain portion of the thriving borough of Peddington has the appearance of a decayed town. It is the southwestern suburb, that most remote from the school, the barracks, the town-hall, banks, and principal shops. It lies on the southern shore of the river Peddle, before it passes the cliff. A church of the latest Gothic period, far too large for modern Protestant usages, yet with an old-world dignity and steadfastness of its own, stands on the brow of the little cliff, overlooking the river. On the opposite side of the river runs the barge path. The Peddle Navigation Company have a lock there, so that the voices of barges and boatmen sometimes break the silence, but the peculiar elegances of their diction are scarcely audible, for a broad weir separates the cliff from the lock.

Except about service times on Sunday, the southern bank is bereaved and silent. Beyond the cliff lies a deep sunk road which terminates abruptly in the river, and doubtless at one time was the abbey moat. Beyond this stand the ruins of an old collegiate building, called "The Abbey," which also looks down upon the river from a gentle elevation of its own. But a window in the old

keep gives out across the sunk road on to the slope of the church-yard, which has crept so near the farthest edge of the cliff that many of the tombstones seem to be tottering on the brink. In this old ruin were Mr. Lane's apartments. Here an aged female ministered to his humble wants, assisted by the parish sexton—a functionary still more venerable than herself, still more exclusively belonging to those generations whose bones were mouldering hard by, and equally attached to their young master with the Titanic form and the visage of Barbarossa. The wags of Pedlington told strange stories of Mr. Lane's mediæval abode and following. The attachment existing between him and these strange domestics was singular, and made itself apparent to those who visited him by their readiness to meet his wishes, often before they were expressed, and by the respectful way in which they spoke of him when absent. During the midsummer vacation at the end of Dr. Phelps's first year at the Grammar School, the Society of Antiquaries paid a visit to Pedlington. The ruined abbey was a centre of attraction. A search was set on foot for Mr. Lane, who was known to have mastered all the historical secrets of his retreat, and said to have opened up one or two secret passages in portions of the thick walls of his dwelling. He was nowhere to be found. The sexton also was absent from his post, and though the ancient woman showed her master's apartments, and even ventured to intimate the regret he would feel on hearing that he had missed the opportunity of enlightening them, she resolutely denied any knowledge of a secret passage. When further pressed, she admitted that Master Graves, the sexton, had turned his talents as an ex-stonemason to account about the premises now and again, but that it had only been to repair the masonry of the windows, and to keep the rain from soaking into the walls. My Lord Pontipool himself, to whom the ruin belonged, called for silence, and asked the gentlemen present whether any one had heard the note of a nightingale, apparently in the dead-wall on the river side of the larger apartment. No one but his lordship had heard the sound. Some one suggested that there must be a concealed defect in the wall, and that the sound came from the terrace walk without, for nightingales were known to build in the shrubs overhanging the river. But most people thought his lordship must have so far partaken of ple-

beian nature as to have erred in this matter, for July was now far spent, and the melodious bird never sings by night or day after hatching the eggs.

They gave up the riddle and repaired to the church. Some zealous genealogists rubbed the brasses, others descended to the crypt, while a chosen few ascended the tower stairs. Among the latter was Albert Browne.

Recounting the adventures of the day afterward in the peaceful seclusion of his family, he vindicated his character for activity on the score of this perilous ascent.

"But, my dear Albert," pleaded his mamma, "what antiquities *did* you expect to find at the top of the tower?"

"We found *one*, my dear mother," he replied, "who had been missing all the afternoon—old Graves, basking on the leads like a lizard, half awake and half asleep, with a short pipe in his toothless gums."

"What could have taken the antediluvian old thing up there?" asked Janet, who had been listening with affected indifference.

"Well, my dear," continued Albert, glowing with pride at having secured a little interest in his narrative, "I believe he must have risked his life up that narrow, dark, and tortuous staircase in the Oriental capacity of punkah-badár to his Serene Highness the Nawaub of the abbey."

This was double Dutch to all present.

"Come, you poor dear old pumpkin," said Nelly, "tell us all about it. We don't know who *Punkybadar* is."

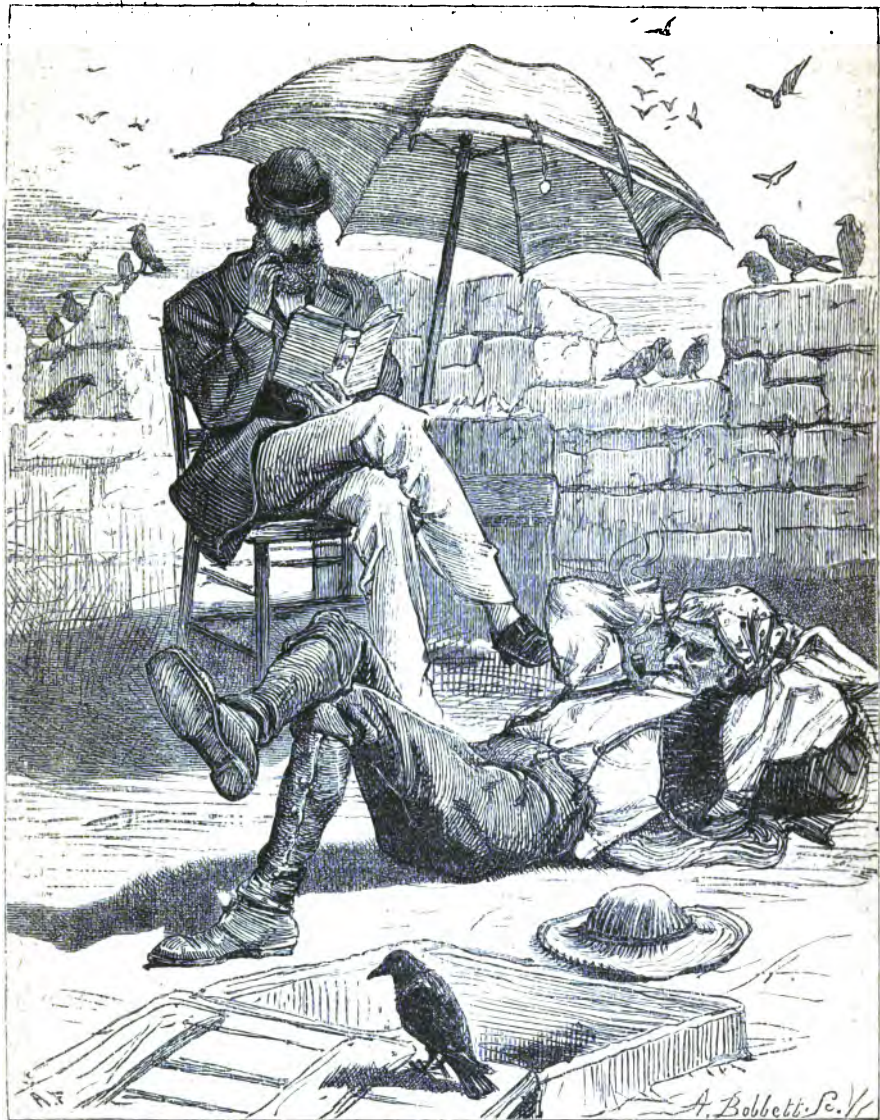
"No, my dear, you misunderstand me," resumed the imperturbable. "A *punkah-badár* is the bearer of a *punkah*, or, in this variable climate, let us say an umbrella—a large green gingham umbrella, with a yellow stick, like Magog's club."

"You don't mean to say he had the impudence to take Mr. Lane's umbrella up there?" asked Janet.

"That useful implement," continued Albert, "which, it appears, does duty alternately as a parapluie and a parasol, was planted upright in a box of clay, and under its ample shade sat his Serene Highness the Nawaub—in point of fact, our friend Mr. Lane."

"Like a sparrow on the house-top," added Frank.

"And talking of birds, Frank," Albert resumed, "I noticed that when *we* emerged from the little trap in the beacon turret a great number of daws and crows took wing from the battlements, and flew round and



"HIS SERENE HIGHNESS THE NAWAB OF THE ABBEY."

round with a great clamor, as if we had disturbed them; from which I gather that they are pretty well acquainted with our friend, and receive *him* sitting."

Then the subject was allowed to drop; but perhaps none of the Brownes afterward, when they saw Mr. Lane, forgot the fanciful picture of the little group on the leads of the tower—Mr. Lane sitting with his book under the shadow of the *umbra*, the old sexton dozing at his feet, and the daws silently perched around them on the battlements.

Something silent and strange about Mr.

Lane drew his two faithful dependents toward him with a bond which they would have been puzzled to define. It was really a fellow-feeling. He was not as the other men of his generation were. Something within him kept him much apart from the world. When he had some duty or object to achieve among his fellows, he went among them. When he came home again, or any one left him alone, he would sit still, apparently absorbed and content, little concerned with that which had just occurred, but falling back upon some private interests of his

own. He was not a fussy, busy man, as English school-masters generally are. At school he dispatched his work quietly, without energizing; yet, judged of by results, his work was excellent. Certain boys of the upper school competed at the Oxford middle-class examinations, when Mr. Lane's pupils excelled in modern languages and chemistry. Mr. Phelps also, to the astonishment of some and indignation of others, had placed the school under government inspection, the lower part of it being, as he said, little more than a commercial academy. Here, again, the Inspectors' reports of Mr. Lane's work were records of the highest praise. Still in his own rooms he was seldom found at work, but would sit silently smoking by his fire-side, or in summer on a broad terrace that ran along the former front of the building, and commanded a view of the country beyond the river. The truth was that he was a night toiler, not working even then systematically, but because his mind wanted food and sustenance, whereas by resting in the leisure hours of the day he had more energy for his duties. Outside of these, all he did was done dreamily and without a definite purpose. Persons who occasionally passed round the angle of the cliff at any hour of the night reported having seen the light in the window of that dismal room, which lay in the shadow of the tombs. The extent of his knowledge was a source of astonishment to many people. When asked to do so he would deliver a lecture at the Mechanics' Institute, leaving the committee to choose their own subject. Sometimes he had forgotten to look at their notice, and came without knowing what subject was allotted him. Then he would plead ignorance, and say he was only there to afford them an hour's amusement, and would talk quite naturally and freely on the subject, managing to project himself into the position of the audience, and look at it with their eyes, and so would interest them more deeply than a professed lecturer would have done, and yet convey a great deal of information bearing either directly or indirectly on the subject.

One day Mr. Phelps was waiting in his room, and seeing a bill on the table, took it up listlessly and read. It was a bookseller's bill, a very long one, the items being a number of the best and most costly books published during the last year on a great variety of subjects.

"My dear fellow," said the Doctor, as Lane

came into the room, "you don't mean to say you buy all these books?"

"Why not?" asked the other.

"But do you read them?" pursued Phelps.

"I believe so," was the answer.

"What on earth do you do with them?" asked Phelps, in astonishment, looking round the room, where many old but no new books were to be seen.

Then Mr. Lane, with a key which hung to his watch-chain, opened a very narrow door, which, being papered like the room, was indistinguishable when closed, and of which the key-hole was concealed by an almanac hanging over it. In the narrow apartment now disclosed stood a stiff upright desk with a book on it, and one end of the room from floor to ceiling was completely lined with books on plain deal shelves. Mr. Phelps had only time to notice that the back of most of these books looked almost new when his attention was drawn from them to a number of birds of various families perched on ramrods, walking-sticks, and joints of fishing-rods, which were stuck across a narrow window and across the corners of the room. They all seemed to watch Mr. Lane with their heads on one side.

"An enchanted aviary!" exclaimed Mr. Phelps, looking from birds to man, then back to the birds.

"They want to sing," said Mr. Lane. "Would you mind their tuning up a little?"

Here one little malefactor set up a shrill piping without leave, and Mr. Lane, taking up the whistle on his chain, blew a blast which immediately silenced him. Then the bully of the perch, a small goldfinch, gave the rebel a severe peck, and turned its back upon him uncereemoniously, again cocking its little head sidewise, and fixing its eye on the master.

Mr. Lane now pointed with his finger to a German canary, which at once poured forth a liquid flood of melody, many parts of which were very similar to the nightingale's song.

Presently it died away. Silence ensued. And saying to them, "No, no more singing just now," as if they had been children, Mr. Lane poured out some rape and hemp seed on the window-ledge, and presently there was a great fluttering and falling to at the delicacy. "Look at that!" he said to Phelps, who, looking, saw the little bird which had been rebuked still sitting disconsolate in the place of its humiliation. "Poor little fellow!" said the master, soothing it. Then, instead of joining in the revelry, the

grateful creature flew on to his shoulder; and there plucked up courage and looked as bold as ever. But now a beautiful little English tomtit, with a yellow frill round its neck, fluttered out from the banquet, and kept flitting to and fro in front of Mr. Lane's face, and pretending to peck at his beard, until he gave it a finger, and caressed it with his other hand.

"I thought you left your canaries in Germany," said Phelps.

"So I did," replied Mr. Lane. "But the same sense of solitude which first made me take to them out there came over me here, and I got that old bird with her mate sent over. The mate died, but she had hatched eggs to continue his race, and all the others are men of Kent and women of Kent."

Perhaps he went on to say more, evidently wishing to obscure the acknowledgment of loneliness which had escaped him. But Phelps listened to no word beyond that, and when Mr. Lane ceased, said, "You told me, when I last begged you to join me, that you never felt lonely now."

"Nor do I, *now*," was the reply.

"But," urged Phelps, "you assuredly have been growing melancholy for a year or more."

"I assure you, it is my habit," pleaded Mr. Lane. "Your visit in Germany roused me out of it, and did really soothe me by awakening my deep sympathy for you. But after I had been here a while there came a relapse. Your burden, my boy, is not like mine. You are afflicted. You sorrow, and are chastened by sorrow. Your heart may be lonely, but your soul is not oppressed within you, as mine is. There is so much awful and horrible misery in the world, one must either be melancholy or—"

"Or what?"

"I don't know."

"Or sociable," said Phelps, and coming up to his friend he looked him eagerly in the face with dark splendid hazel eyes lit with the glow of a loving heart. Then added, "Come to me, Bedford, I will find a nook for your birds, and we will read all the new books together."

But Mr. Lane turned half aside, sadly, not caring to return that steady gaze with one less honest, less generous. "I know it must make you mad," he said, "to ask a wretched fellow like me so often to come and be happy, and to be refused. But remember, my dear old boy, you are the prince, I the churl."

"Then you *will* not come?" Phelps rejoined, with ill-concealed chagrin.

"No, I will not," returned Mr. Lane. "I tell you, Henry, you are a year older than I, and a century wiser, but you judge wrong in this matter. It would not be well for you or me that we should live together."

So far Lane spoke sincerely. Then by way of carrying conviction to his hearer's mind he became insincere. "Suppose," he said, "after I had become very dependent upon your society and intercourse, you were to marry again!"

At this point in the conversation the little blue tomtit, which had a most insinuating way of moving its head and eye, and pecking with its tiny beak (looking at its master's eye between each peck), sprang with a flutter of its delicate wings from Mr. Lane's finger to Phelps's wrist, as if by some subtle instinct it knew that he suffered pain at the hand of its master. Lane's fiery black eyes, which contrasted strangely with his dark russet eyebrows and hair, now filled with sudden tears. "Forgive me, my dear boy!" he cried, passionately. Somehow or other he often called his senior a "boy." "I trifle with feelings which ought to be sacred to me above all men. I did not mean that. I am a brute as well as a churl. The truth is, my Henry, I'm—"

Here he paused for a long minute, and Phelps said, gravely, "You are neither brute nor churl, Bedford; but what *are* you, that you hesitate to say?"

"I am beginning—nay, more, I have begun—to believe things which you don't believe. Too close a companionship with you would unsettle what little faith I have. Even as it is I often get a chill from you which throws me back, and makes things seem incredible which I have resolved to believe."

The little bird jumped, in its pretty, coaxing way, up the fore-arm of Mr. Phelps, and gazed steadfastly into his eye.

That learned and candid gentleman did certainly feel somewhat aggrieved. So he was a radical iconoclast, a disturber of faith, a quencher of smoking flax! He, H.P., M.A., LL.D., late H.M.I. of S., in the confidence of the Privy Council!

But the man who, not having yet attained to "self-knowledge," if he be still unwittingly a Jew, Turk, infidel, or heretic, yet having "self-reverence" and "self-control," will not give place to anger, but will allow the feeling to pass away, and then reason with his traducer.

"Let us go for a stretch on the hills," Mr.

Phelps said now. "The fresh air will give us both a tone which this valley robs us of. And I shall meet my boys coming home with their boy-master."

And forth they went, saying no more just then about faith or heresy.

"That was a dear little bird that made those pacific overtures to me," Phelps observed, after they had walked in silence for some time.

"Yes," his friend answered. "My guardian angel inhabits that little form. The bird attached itself to me in the November after we came here, at a time when I was undergoing a fierce though unseen conflict. It was a wild bird then, but lost its mate, and came to live with me of its own free-will. Now it flies into my room every night, and roosts on the rail at the foot of my bed, just under the crucifix."

CHAPTER V.

DUST TO DUST.

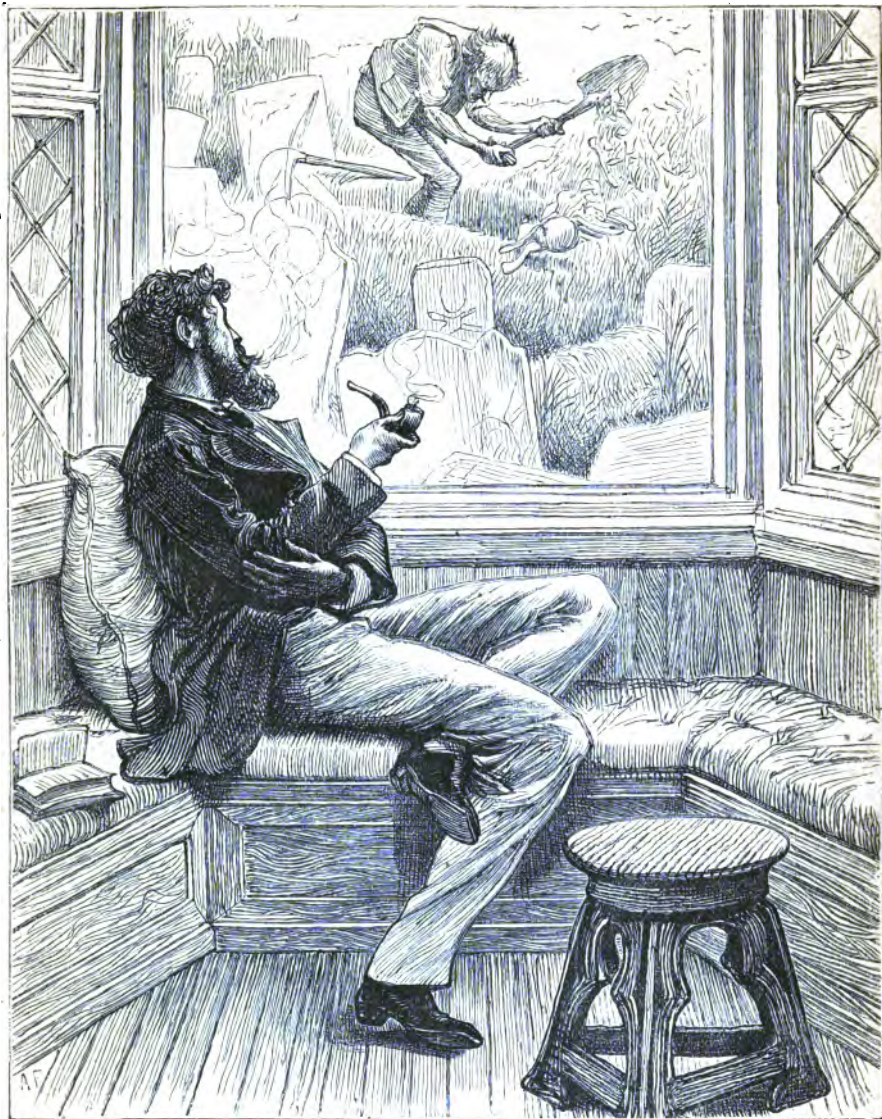
PERHAPS Mr. Lane's life, though preserved by his steady work in school and his habit of much reading, was not altogether a healthy one at this period of his career. In his bedroom, which was itself a vault-like apartment, he had on a *priedieu* two white skulls grinning at each other in a small glass case. This was by way of cheerfully illustrating the sequel of a sexual passion. In another small glass receptacle was preserved a human stomach—certainly a most unworthy object to live for. In a third was exhibited the brain of a man who had mastered many sciences, and ultimately died of congestion of the brain. The cerebrum and cerebellum were carefully adjusted as in the living head; and this was the organ with which man undertook to criticise the Divine will!

Immediately over this hung one of the most ghastly crucifixes ever produced by a horrible manipulation of form and color. Happily the *priedieu* was a shelf which depended from the bottom of the triptych containing this crucifix; and it was so arranged that he closed it all up, and effectually secreted it under a spring-lock, by merely shutting the triptych doors. The pernicious effect of these sights was therefore not extended to his domestics or any chance visitor who might stray into the room.

After his lugubrious devotions at the foot

of this pious apparatus, Mr. Lane would repair to the large window of his sitting-room, in which was a broad seat, conducive to the meditative pipe. Here he would sit and gaze wistfully through his smoke wreaths at the old sexton digging a grave on the church-yard slope. Sometimes he felt very weary of his secret burden, and wished that his body too might be left tenantless, and his bones denuded to furnish a *priedieu*, or be ground into flour for poor men's bread. How was it all to end, he asked himself sometimes, all this labor and trouble, this secrecy and apprehension, this abnegation and distrust of self? Could he really do any good in the world, or secure his acceptance out of it? Are deadly sins really forgiven? Or is the load of conscience merely lightened to give the will and passions play? Surely that terrible sacrifice of Calvary would never have been consummated had God been merciful. Fatuous blindness, to reckon on mercy where "the Holy One and Just" found none. "My God! my God! why hast Thou forsaken me?" The career of man seemed to Mr. Lane at these moments like that of the moth, which seems to be a free agent, and yet, attracted by some irresistible impulse, flies into the flame which inflicts upon it an agonizing death. Yet, come what will after death, death itself comes on apace. Of that no doubt can be entertained even by the fatuous, self-deluding creature called man. For how many dead men had that poor old sexton prepared the narrow bed? Some thousands at least! Say only one a week for fifty years, there would be two thousand six hundred provided for; and there they *are*, too, at least all that remains of them. And there he is, digging away still. Inch by inch, sometimes three or four inches at a drop, the old man's lean shanks disappear. Then his old bent body sinks out of view. His head bobs up and down a little while, then is gone. Now nothing but spadefuls of damp red mould and rotten wood and brittle bones come surging up from the world of the dead.

The dead men nearest to Mr. Lane were on a level with his head as he sat in his pleasant oriel. Those farther off were higher and higher. Terraces of dead men, one above another, on the dismal slope. Along each terrace the corpses lay, closely ranged, head to foot and head to foot. Three coffin deep lay the dead men every where, till the lowest coffin, with its grim remains, rotted and sunk and slunk away, earth to



"HERE HE WOULD SIT AND GAZE WISTFULLY THROUGH HIS SMOKE WREATHS AT THE OLD SEXTON DIGGING A GRAVE ON THE CHURCH-YARD SLOPE."

earth, or, oozing out, exhaled in the church-yard mist. Then would come the tottering sexton with his iron probe, and find there was room. Down would sink his old lean shanks and crooked back, and up would come the spadefuls of mould and mortality, clearing the space, making ready for the rest of another weary head.

Above this garden of the dead the church rose gaunt and gray, itself a temple of the dead. There they lay, whole generations of them, huddled under the slabs which paved the transepts, under the aisles, under

the chancel tiles. Some had crept to their last refuge under the very walls, so that when the bells rung out a full chime from the central tower the whole sarcophagus rocked and trembled over their crumbling vaults.

Seldom were those bells at rest, though not often did they sound a summons to praise and prayer. But almost daily a "passing bell" told that some tenant's quarter was up, that a wanderer was moving from his house of clay. Almost daily a bell was tolled feebly, as if the dead man had

not paid enough for a few lusty strokes. Presently it died away; then began again—toll, toll. And now a pitiful file of black figures creeps through the dismal dripping rain and oozing slime. This sorry group disappears for a while, then is seen crawling about and clustering round a little heap of mud. The querulous tones of the old curate's cracked treble rise and fall; one meagre black form is convulsed with sobbing, or perhaps with cold and ague; and then what? For the living, winter winds and rain and mist, scorching summer suns and drought and thirst; summer and winter, toil upon toil, and sorrow upon sorrow, until the end, the faintly tolling bell, the hole in the damp church-yard, the sound of the curate's voice. And for the dead, what? Is it "a fearful looking for of judgment," or "the peace that passeth understanding?"

One sad November day the bell beat its hollow plaint for a girl who was "found drowned," as the coroner's jury pathetically expressed it, in a tributary brook which flowed into the river just above the abbey. She must have been "mighty weary o' her life," the sexton told Mr. Lane, for the water was scarcely three feet deep. Yet there she lay on her face, with pale hands clutching at the roots of rushes and water forget-me-nots. Perhaps some lover had gathered her a posy of them not many months before. Another day the bell tolled lustily with no uncertain note—and doubtless this time it raised an echoing chime of marriage-bells in many a waiting breast—for one of the local bankers, a pursy, tyrannous old man, had left his earthly tabernacle, and set out on that moneyless journey from which no traveler returns. Then the poor had their turn again, and made the best of it. That winter they seemed, to Mr. Lane to hurry out of this dolorous life more resolutely than before; no man waiting for his turn, but sometimes two or three jostling each other on the road. The sexton had to send for his son from Farfield, and the two old men (for the son was nearly as old as the father) had a merry time of it. Mr. Lane added the filial old man to his household, and supplied him with tobacco on the paternal scale, so that he acquainted Ada, the housekeeper, in confidence, with his ardent desire that the mortality in Pedlington might "never leave off no more." A cemetery was being laid out in another suburb of the town, and both the churchyards and the old parish grave-diggers were condemned by anticipation; but these an-

cients were quite unable to comprehend such a revolution actually taking place, nor did the slightest misgiving seem to suggest to them that after stowing away about three thousand fellow-creatures in their narrow beds, their own turn to submit to a similar operation might arrive. Rather they seemed to consider that all mortality, parturition, and matrimony—in short, all the transitions of the human race—would cease if their peculiar functions were to be suspended. And as to the banker, Mr. Lane felt pretty sure, without instituting any inquiry, that he had taken his notice to quit reluctantly, and would fain have carried his purse with him when he went. But for those poor men and women, those careless tenants who left without notice, what change for the better did they anticipate? What were they seeking? Was it rest?

At a very late hour one evening toward the close of the year Mr. Lane heard unusual sounds of a violent ringing at his bell, then of a man's (an old man's) step in the hall, then a murmured colloquy and a closing of the front-door. In another minute Mr. Graves senior stood in the room.

"Well, Graves?" inquired the master, kindly.

"He be a-going," was the partial explanation.

Mr. Lane had no clew to the name of the individual represented by that little pronoun, but it was a rule with him not to gossip nor encourage others to gossip on affairs which did not concern them. If some one of sufficient importance for his servants to ring the sexton up at this hour and send him to toll the passing bell were dying, and he, Mr. Lane, was not even aware of his illness, he evidently was not concerned in the gentleman's decease. Therefore he said nothing. Graves already had the tower key in his hand; but before quitting the room he came with a half-deprecatory, half-triumphant manner close to his master, and jerking his withered thumb back over his right shoulder in the direction of the church, whispered, hoarsely, "I've a-buried four on 'em. This makes FIVE." His watery old gray eyes lit up with exultation, and the word "five" broke out of the whisper in which he had thought proper to convey the information, and sounded more like a suppressed shriek than a loud whisper. Then pulling the scant gray forelock which adorned his brow, this ally of old Time set off to fulfill his professional engagement. Lane

understood now that the rector of Pedlington was summoned to that interview with the Master of the flock which all shepherds, whether faithful or unfaithful, will have to attend sooner or later.

For full two hours, at intervals, the bell warned all evil-disposed spirits to clear the way for the rector's soul, and give him a free passage to the celestial courts. Mr. Lane, still keeping vigil, was regarding them as courts of judicature rather than as mere galaxies of power and splendor. At length the bell ceased. The soul had passed.

"I suppose he will have 'benefit of clergy,'" the layman murmured to himself. This solitary man, who was fighting his way honestly though blindly through a legion of spiritual foes, and a region beset with perils of many kinds, had often wondered how it was that in a country which supports a costly and magnificent state church, and which boasts of having trampled upon all the enemies of the soul, and especially removed Roman scales from the spiritual eye-sight, a poor wayfarer is left to blunder and stumble in the midst of hostile forces, and no city of refuge is open to receive him, nor any succor reaches him when sore beset. The rector, it is true, had mumbled over a few dry sermons at noon on Sundays. These may have bristled with the panoply of righteousness; but if so, they required a master at arms to select and distribute appropriate weapons to the combatants. At other times the faded curate used to take up his parable and edify those whom he edified, but Mr. Lane was not one of these. As long as the divine adhered closely to his authorities, or merely attempted harmless antitheses, he did very well; but as sure as he was betrayed into analogy or interpretation, so sure was he to collapse ignominiously. Sometimes he would descant on charity and justice, but before he had gone far he would blunder into a slough of bigotry and malice, and flounder there, bespattering his hearers with silly words and unseemly phrases. When faith and works were the theme of his discourse, he would so shuffle his views of the conflicting schools of thought on this subject that one would have thought his doctrine to be that faith was wholly independent of the human will, and that good works or a holy life were generally the offspring of spiritual pride. Mr. Lane wondered, as well he might, whether the inert rector or the inapt curate had ever helped a single benighted soul along the trackless waste of the spiritual life, and

what sort of account would be required of the former now that his stewardship was ended and his soul had traversed the valley of the shadow of death. As for the hapless curate, there were men in Pedlington, middle-aged professional men, who said he could preach good sermons once, and had done so on his arrival among them, but that the rector (who called himself "*a via media theologian*") had complained of the positiveness of his doctrine; and the poor man, who had a wife and five children depending on his pittance, had muddled and blended and pared and modified, till he exhibited the pitiful spectacle of a preacher maintaining with zeal which amounted to rancor a confusion of theology to which you could assign neither a habitation nor a name.

"Now what is it that I don't believe, Bedford?" asked Phelps of his friend later in the afternoon of that day when their previous conversation occurred. He had said nothing in the heat of his indignation at being reckoned an enemy to the faith by one who knew his heart, and could see that his life was in accordance with the faith. The Doctor knew how to "give place to wrath." Besides which, he was always glad to have a light thrown upon his own conduct. As an enthusiastic lover of liberty, he might, in criticising dogma, have passed the moral limits and degenerated into license. If so, by all means let him bear reproof.

"Now what is it that I don't believe?" he repeated. Mr. Lane had well-nigh forgotten that imputation on his chief's orthodoxy. Since making it they had walked several miles over the windy hills, and felt again like brothers, looking over the purple weald country, with all its "farms and towers lessening t'wards the bounding main;" and most devoutly Mr. Lane wished in his heart that his secret, on the one hand, and his faith, on the other, would leave him free to be knit together with Henry Phelps as one soul. Moreover, he was nervously anxious to avoid a theological discussion, partly from a sound conviction that he would be worsted in any such encounter, but partly from a secret knowledge that in his own heart he was applying to Phelps the Scriptural phrase "the natural man," and to his religious opinions "the wisdom of this world," while at the same time he felt it was unjust thus to prejudge the whole case.

"Pray be candid," urged Phelps. "I'm

accustomed to having my knuckles rapped by Puritan parents. What don't I believe?"

And Mr. Lane said, "You can not surely challenge me to name *one* thing which you don't believe?"

"I do," replied Phelps. "Name one."

Mr. Lane cast about in his mind for a dogma or person the very name of which should at once silence this bold heretic, and put an end to the controversy.

"The devil," he said, defiantly, but after due consideration.

"I rehearse the creeds," observed Mr. Phelps, doggedly.

"Well?" rejoined Mr. Lane, not quite seeing the drift of the argument.

"They don't mention him," Mr. Phelps added, in explanation.

"Nor they do," Mr. Lane reluctantly admitted, seeing already that he had made a bad beginning. "But surely," he added, "the devil is plainly spoken of in the Bible."

"Yes," said Phelps, quite seriously; "and *subjectively* he exists always. There's a great deal too much of him in all of us for my liking. But believe me, my dear Bedford, the belief in an *objective* devil is only necessary to men in a transitory stage of the spiritual life. You will emerge from that some day, and yet believe in that curse of humanity no less honestly than I do now."

Whereupon the discussion dropped. Phelps would challenge his matter-of-fact friend no more, and Mr. Lane was only too willing to give him credit for a modified orthodoxy; but he felt, and it pained him to feel, that between them a great gulf was widening.

The Doctor, on his part, believed that Lane would soon arrive at his own speculative level. But he was a far-seeing man. "And after that," he said to himself, "there will still be a barrier, I fear insurmountable. That gaunt skeleton in Bedford's cupboard has more reality about it than our friend with the horns and hoofs has about him."

CHAPTER VI.

DISAFFECTION.

Two years and a half have elapsed since the Grammar School at Pedlington was reopened under the auspices of Dr. Phelps. Hubert has made excellent progress with his studies, and reads privately with Mr. Lane twice a week, besides doing his fair

share of school-work. Mr. Lane has slowly but surely come to be acknowledged as a friend of the family. The modesty and reluctance with which he met their first overtures at friendly intercourse rather prepossessed Mr. Browne in his favor, that gentleman being himself slow to form new acquaintances, and being accustomed to see young men jump rather too readily at opportunities for establishing an intimacy with a family so remarkable for the beauty of its young women. Quite a little amicable rivalry exists between Frank and Hubert as to whose friend Mr. Lane should be considered, Hubert having first spoken to him, but Frank having first invited him to the house.

At a quarter before 9 o'clock A.M. Mrs. and Mr. Browne, Joan, Nelly, Frank, and Hubert, sit down to breakfast in the long parlor with the long mahogany table. It is called "the dining-room," but is used for all meals except tea, which is served in the drawing-room above. Perhaps two chairs which remain vacant at 8.45 A.M. give rise to a momentary feeling of anger in the breast of *paterfamilias*, and a moment's plaintive regret in that of Mrs. Browne; but the gentleman is soon busily occupied with breakfast and the newspaper; and habit is a second nature. They are accustomed to see Albert's chair and Janet's unoccupied. Albert, besides being in bondage to Morpheus, is given to musing over his toilet. Janet *will* have her forty winks after the first bell rings, and sometimes only jumps out of bed at sound of the second. Whether she thinks that people ought to be glad to see any thing so bright and beautiful as she is at any hour, is not known; but it is shrewdly suspected that but for the Persian manifesto, which requires the table to be cleared at 9.30, she would still further prolong her slumbers. Having once imprudently done so, she lost her breakfast, and was reduced to plead humbly at the kitchen door for a crust of bread; for Janet is blessed with a hearty appetite, and another manifesto forbids any member of the family, except mamma, to pass the culinary threshold.

Eating goes on briskly, while conversation is languid and desultory. Sister Joan, behind the urn, looks like Minerva; Mr. Browne, at the other end of the long table, is invisible behind the *Times*; Nelly is reading a long letter, crossed and recrossed, Hubert doing tremendous execution on the fried bacon, eggs, and water-cresses; Mrs. Browne,

sitting next to Joan, hands the cups, which that virgin supplies with tea and coffee.

"I hate talking at breakfast-time," Frank says, in answer to Nelly, who, looking across from her letter, has just mentioned her conviction that the Browne colony at breakfast resembles "a Quakers' meeting." "I hate talking at breakfast-time," he says; "it makes your head ache, and unfits you for work."

"What is that, Frank?" inquires Mr. Browne, looking round the edge of his paper with a seductive smile.

Frank repeats his observation, with repressed rage.

"Work?" echoes his amiable papa, in a mellifluous tone, as if he had imperfectly heard the word.

"Yes, work," replies Frank, with emphasis, and regarding his parent with unfilial glances.

Mr. Browne calmly lays down his *Times*, and surveys the company all round with a cheerful and inquiring glance, as who should say, "Did I hear Frank mention work? If any one present has ever chanced to see him at work, a statement to that effect would cause me an agreeable surprise."

Mrs. Browne, answering that look with a gentle sigh, shakes her head despondently, which action Frank does not fail to observe. But grinding his white teeth together, and saying nothing, he proceeds with his meal, cursing his father and his fate inwardly.

"My mother has a nasty way of condoling with the governor," Frank used often to say to his friend Mr. Lane, "on my assumed idleness, by which pretense they justify each other for ill-using me. Not that my mother is to blame, because, you know, a wife is a wife. But you must see, Lane, that every thing would come to a dead lock without me. I look after all the office-work, you know. Very often I go for the governor, always with him when he does go, to Petty Sessions and Boards of Guardians, and all that sort of thing. And though he prompts every one else, I have to prompt him. His memory is not what it was, though he thinks it is. And then there's that egregious ass, Albert! I declare that fellow doesn't earn his salt; and you'd hardly believe it, but in the deed of partnership I had to bind myself to keep him here and allow him £100 a year, or to let him go and give him £200 a year for life. They want to make a pauper of me, just because I wouldn't

marry a most ill-favored young lady who my father had set his heart upon for my wife."

So poor, virtuous, injured Frank used to pour out his grievances into Mr. Lane's sympathetic ear, and the counselor was sorely puzzled to understand the rights of this question. Unless Frank was attending some board or consultation, he was always to be found in his private office, writing letters, or revising the draft of a deed, or paring his nails over "a confounded new act." "There are new acts, you know, always coming down, to be got up," he would say. Even after tea he used often to return to his office, saying he had more work to do; though the girls, who once made a nocturnal descent upon him in that awful seclusion, used to laugh merrily when they maintained that he was discovered "immersed in parchments and begrimed with ink."

The tea-pot being hopelessly deluged with tepid water, and the table-cloth well littered with crumbs, Albert sauntered in, moon-faced, pallid, and bald, with a melancholy mustache of a reddish-yellow, and a violet silk neck-tie. Making an elaborate bow and smile to the company after shutting the door, he advanced to the vacant chair at Nelly's side,

"Washing his hands with invisible soap
In imperceptible water."

Among certain ruins of breakfast which still graced the festive board, one egg-cup still appeared to contain a *bona fide* egg. Eying this, with his head on one side, Albert touched Nelly's hand lightly with his forefinger, and said, "Ahem! I say, Nelly dear, no sells?"

Nelly, reaching the egg-cup in a very matter-of-fact manner, took the egg out and turned it over to prove its solidity. Then she placed it before Albert, who, having been repeatedly imposed upon by cavernous eggshells inverted, wisely secured an alliance with sharp and punctual Nelly.

Then cutting himself a slice of bread with as much care as if it were to be the foundation-stone of his fortunes, Albert glanced across the table at the butter, but seeing Frank angry and eating, walked round the table and carried the butter-dish to his own place, offering a piece to Nelly before helping himself.

"Thank you, my dear old Pumpkin," said Nelly, smiling, and determined to countenance her brother. "You behave charm-

ingly when you *do* come, at any rate." She had a playful way of giving her friends horticultural names, and selected this one for Albert on account of some fancied resemblance between his head and that vegetable. But she declined to limit herself strictly to resemblances in this nomenclature, having bestowed the name of "The Black Tulip" on Mr. Lane, partly because he had lent her a little French story called *La Tulipe Noire*, and in part because he was in appearance as little like that rare, dark, and slender flower as possible.

Albert also attempted to cover his want of punctuality by a facetious and imperturbable politeness. Seeing that Joan sat rigid and impregnable behind the urn, he cleared his throat again. "Ahem-hem! Joan, may I, although a Cipher, trouble you for a cup of that delicate infusion which still, if I am not mistaken, simmers in the family teapot?"

Mrs. Browne was not proof against this good temper. Perhaps, indeed, she had a peculiar tenderness for her eldest son on account of a certain feebleness in his constitution, which rendered him almost unfit for the stern battle of life. Catching his eye now, she nodded to him with her gentle smile, which atoned for the quality of his tea, for Albert was only more lazy than sensitive.

Presently this ill-starred young man, who had a habit of stiffening one leg over the knee of the other, dropped a slipper off his extended foot, and conscientiously crawled under the table to recover it, while Frank, with a sly kick, dispatched it to the region of his father's Wellingtons.

Mr. Browne pushed his chair back with an angry gesture, and walked off with his newspaper, Albert presently emerging in the spot vacated by his father. Thus Frank, having made a hearty breakfast and discomfited his enemies, also left the room, smiling affably.

As Mr. Browne passed through the hall toward the door which led to the offices, Janet, all smiles and blushes, with her beautiful hair forming a perfect crown upon her broad white forehead, came bounding down the stairs. He turned from her, but she ran up and tapped him on the shoulder. "Please, pa, it's me," she said. Mr. Browne turned again, trying in vain to look angry. How could he, in the face of such smiling beauty? She was the flower of his flock, the apple of his eye. Giving him a pretty kiss, she added, "Only me."

Who can expect beauty to speak in good

grammar, or to come down punctually at 8.45 to breakfast? Mr. Browne went to his dingy office and musty papers quite happy. The little bit of pretty girl grammar and the pretty kiss and the image of his darling cheered him. Who shall say that old age is not romantic? For my part, I quite long to be old, that I may acquire the simple, generous, little-exacting romance of old age. Talk about querulous, selfish old age! What so querulous, so egotistic, so captious, as youth? Why, half the young men in Pedlington wanted to have Janet Browne and her £12,000 all to themselves, *i. e.*, each one to himself, and then would have broken her sweet fragile spirit, and made a sour prude or a savage virago of her, while her dear old father was delighted with a false concord and a kiss.

But Janet never kissed any one except her father, not even her mother. So you see he had a monopoly after all.

Then "me" bounced into the parlor, with a saucy little courtesy to mamma and the rest of them, and fell to daintily at a large piece of dry bread and the remnant of a pat of butter.

"Where is Berty?" she asked, presently.

"Gone to school ten minutes or a quarter of an hour ago," answered sister Joan, severely.

As Janet sat opposite the three windows of the long room on the ground-floor, her eyes traversed them slowly from left to right, as if she were following Hubert schoolward. She was very fond of Berty, so she said. And as she looked, a dreamy lustre deepened in the sapphire of her eyes.

As the French say of women, "*Il y a des femmes et des femmes*," so we may say of blue eyes. Many women of our Anglo-Saxon descent have blue eyes; and when you look at them, unless you happen to be color-blind, you see they are blue. But if Janet Browne passed you in a crowded thoroughfare, an image of a face actually illuminated with two wondrous orbs of matchless sapphire would dwell in your memory, and every drop of blood coursing through the veins all over your body would experience a delight. It is impossible to define this power of beauty, and it baffles the mind to consider whether such eyes would have a similar (though, of course, modified) power if the rest of the face were deficient in beauty. Frank used to say that a little blue vein visible in the hollow on each side of the bridge of the nose was the peculiar feature about Janet's eyes. Others

attributed their charm to the long black curling lashes; but in this respect Nelly had rather the advantage. Most probably it is the subtle power of *harmony* which nature achieves in some faces, where the beauty of the eye is merely the key-note of the whole composition.

Whatever the day-dream was which now caused that lustre in Janet's eyes, it was rudely broken.

"My dear Janet," Mrs. Browne began, "I must beg that you will come down in time for breakfast. It does vex your papa so not to see you all punctual."

The good lady had not witnessed the "me" episode in the hall.

"I can not see any more difficulty in coming down at a quarter before nine than at ten minutes past," said Joan.

"I fear I set the bad example, and ought to bear the blame," interposed Albert, gallantly. "And, indeed, for some weeks past I have been revolving measures of reform. Only I am so reluctant to innovate. But now I am resolved. Desperate evils require desperate remedies. Janet, what do you say to half an hour's walk *before* breakfast every morning?"

"I should love it," said that young lady, promptly.

"Very good, my dear," continued Albert, formally—"very good! Now this is a contract terminable at three days' notice on either side. It comes into operation tomorrow at a quarter past eight o'clock. And you shall choose your own route."

Janet bounded on her chair, munching her bread, and expressing her satisfaction by smiles and ecstatic movements.

"I don't know what papa will say to such new doings," remarked Mrs. Browne, when her eldest son flashed out this bright suggestion, and her youngest daughter fluttered into it like a moth into a candle flame.

But Joan conceived an abyss of danger to lurk under this seeming innocent proposition. She endeavored to save her sister from it by the suggestion of a material obstacle. "Walking before breakfast, indeed!" she exclaimed. "Nice chilblains you'll have on your feet at this time of the year!"

"You see," pleaded Albert, who always paid attention to any advice or expostulation offered to him—"you see, the real reason why we are late for breakfast is a profound one. It lies in the perversity of human nature, the natural resistance to law. We do *not* breakfast early of our own accord; but

if we take a walk every morning at a quarter past eight, which no one orders us to do, we shall rise like the lark."

"I dare say that's true," rejoined the mother, timidly speculating on the superior efficacy of will to law. But the proposition was too metaphysical for Janet, who determined on the walk. "Because I should like it," as she said to herself, and was quite satisfied with that reason, though there may have been another anonymously lurking in a dark corner of her little brain.

After breakfast, when the ladies were sitting at work in the cozy little "morning-room," with a bright fire glowing on the hearth, Mrs. Browne re-opened the unpleasant subject by saying, "Do you know, Janet, I think if you loved your papa you would find it easy to obey him in little things. I can not say that I think it becoming or amiable for a girl to insist upon having her own way."

When this damsel was being scolded she used to abstain from speech altogether, unless asked a direct question. Knowing her habits, Mrs. Browne asked, "Do you love him, Janet?"

"Yes, I do," she replied; "more than—" She was about to add "you," but substituted the more general term, "any one."

"I'm sure I am glad to hear you say so, my dear," Mrs. Browne resumed, "because I know you always speak the truth, and I think you will try to see these little matters as I do, and conform to your papa's wishes in every thing. You must admit he is an indulgent parent."

But Janet's affection for her father had been forced in an artificial atmosphere. She had formed a little conspiracy with herself to spoil herself, and not to submit to law, in practice or theory. If it had been her habit to speak out what passed through her mind, when lectured by her mother or sister Joan, some very startling propositions would have been enunciated in the placid region of Mr. Browne's domesticity. At her little conspiracy her father connived, and she knew that he connived at it. If this had been the result of paternal astuteness, if Mr. Browne had seen that Janet's wrists would not bear fetters, and relaxed them in wisdom, the effect would have been good. But it was really the hard man's soft place. Janet was his little sweetheart. He would humor and encourage her with sly smiles when he would have spoken harshly to another; but when she grew insolent, and thought he was van-

quished, he would rise and crush her with some terrible ukase which not even she ventured to contravene. In consequence of this inconsistent treatment the daughter behaved strangely to her father, at one time wheeling him with sweet confidence, at another (and this usually the result of his barren victory) absolutely refusing to speak to him for days together. Then Mrs. Browne would commence with her usual formula, "My dear Janet, your conduct to your papa is not becoming. Do you intend at some future time to treat your husband like this?"

For Mrs. Browne had a shrewd notion that the way in which a young lady behaves to her father foreshadows her conduct to her husband.

Janet, upon this, contemplated the tip of her boot, and answered, thoughtfully, "If ever I do have a husband, I hope he'll make me respect him."

This was a hand-grenade for mamma. "But, my dear," she urged, "surely you respect your papa?"

Again Janet thought before she spoke, and this time got fairly out of her depth.

"Yes, I do respect papa," she said.

"I hope so, my dear," her mother added. "He is universally respected."

Janet was in deep waters, and unable to think her way out, much less to express her thought in words. She respected her father's character because he was manful and masterful, and perhaps even more because she was sure that he was a man who had only loved once, and that her mother was the one woman. But though she would not have expressed it in so many words, she saw, at first dimly, afterward plainly, that in mind he was an egotist, never listening to reason on any subject where reason conflicted with his prejudice; in consequence of which she neither respected his opinion (when she saw any reason for differing from it) nor valued his judgment, which still was necessarily her law.

And far more than this: how far beyond her power to state or even to settle to her own mind clearly! Janet was a little volcano of pent-up enthusiasm and aspirations. Occult longings, leanings toward high and noble things, found no sympathy in him, no culture in the system of which she found herself a part. They were stifled at the birth. Heaven, which surrounds us all in infancy, though men may have forgotten it, and overlaid it with crusts of earth, was walled and roofed out from her. Now when

any thing high or noble chanced to come her way, she had little power to recognize it, not a chord within her so strung as to vibrate to the heavenly finger. Very likely she would join in Frank's sneer at it, catching at the meagre fun for want of higher emotion. If the whole interest of every member of her family was centred in himself or herself, or at best in the others—if they all habitually traced every result back to a desire for profit or amusement—if they seemed unable even to understand how any thing should originate in higher motives, and if Frank generalized all such phenomena as "humbugs," whose fault was it?

Blindly and very reluctantly Janet laid all this and much more at her father's door. She did not see, nor did she suppose it possible to see, how it was chargeable to him. But she said to herself, "He has ruled in all things." These thoughts naturally only came to her at times; but at these times she used to make a resolution, and register a vow in her own mental tablets: "If ever a man marries 'ME,' he shall be a man very unlike papa, still more unlike my brothers, and unlike all their friends except one."

Then her fancy would run on this exception. "I am sure HE is quite different," she thought. "Fancy any of my brothers lecturing to the poor mechanics for nothing, or living contentedly in that gloomy old place alone, and making those antediluvian old things love him as much as Berty and all the boys do! Fancy Frank sitting all day at the top of the old tower, studying, with all those queer jackdaws sitting round him, and that dear old Graves dozing at his feet! See how different he is in church: kneeling when he prays, and always looking as if he thought it really was the house of God, instead of going through it as a decent ceremony, and not looking at all the girls as if it were a concert or a ball-room! And how he looks when Frank makes one of his clever little sarcasms! Like those great curly retrievers when the little dogs bark at them. Yet he is very fond of Berty. I can see that by the way in which he puts his hand on Berty's shoulder. And Berty adores him. He must like Frank too; or why should he come here so often? I'm sure he takes no notice of me. One would think I was only an ornament on the mantel-piece. But he thinks me rather pretty. That I know." Here the young lady's mind pauses and reflects. "I wonder why he does come here so often now! At first he used to seem an-

noyed at having to come, and always came late and went early. Now he comes unasked. But he never asks for *me*. I suppose if I went away for a whole week he would never inquire what had become of *me*. And he can go to much nicer houses than this, houses where the people understand him better. The Delavines are never happy unless they have 'poor Mr. Lane,' as they call him, at their horrid parties. They pretend to think he is unhappy and wants sympathy. He *isn't* unhappy. He *doesn't* want sympathy. He never confesses that he is sad to us. But *I* know. Yes, he *is* unhappy. He *does* want sympathy. Poor Mr. Lane! And he thinks we are really a happy family, and likes the picture of a home, as they say all lonely men do. I don't. I hate it. It's a prison, home is. I want freedom, liberty from this tyranny that has made me what I am."

Now Janet stamped her tiny foot upon the ground, and fretted and fumed in imaginary bondage. Then words laden with sacred associations came to her, and she repeated them slowly: "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest."

It seems incredible that a young lady so comfortably circumstanced should have felt the sense of weariness implied in that aspiration. For a moment she hesitated, doubting whether it could be so, but soon decided that she, even she, was weary of life and its puzzles. "No wonder," she reflected, "that mamma has that settled look of wonder on her face. She too is puzzled, but is too subservient to papa to breathe a word of what she feels. There is no one to explain any thing to me. No one but mamma sees there is any thing to be explained. Papa pooh-poohs it all. I don't think he sees it. He would laugh at my perplexities. There must be some great difference between him and me. I want some one to understand me, and to lead me somewhere. How weary my poor little head is!"

Then Janet burst out into a wild, shrill laugh, which, if a wise man had loved her, he would have grieved to hear; for it sounded like the voice of young Despair, that worst enemy of heart and mind. She laughed at the recollection of one of Frank's witticisms. To her, condoling with him on the gradual approach of baldness, he had replied, "*I* have something else to do with *my* brains; yours run to seed, and spring up in that marvelous crop of hair."

But the feeble joke passed from her memory, and left her more sad, more weary. "Yes," she murmured, "I would 'fly away, and be at rest,' rest, rest." And again the dreamy eyes wandered as if in search of some one, and the sapphire deepened in them.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RAPE OF THE GAMP.

PEOPLE who live on the margin of a river, especially those who devote much of their leisure time to boating, fishing, and bathing, become as warmly attached to their little tributary as dwellers by the sea-shore do to the mighty ocean. The humble river, like the proud sea, has a voice with many tones; and never a mood of him who loves and listens goes without a response in reedy pool or rocky shallow. It is not, then, to be wondered at that Mr. Lane, who dwelt so near the peaceful river Peddle, and passed so much of his time on its glassy surface, or along its flowery meads and richly wooded slopes—that he should also about this time have taken to walking along the terrace which is cut in the side of the Pedlington cliff, and so reaching the Grammar School by way of the Fair Meadow, thus keeping the river in view as he walked. I can not tell why, but his former habit had been to turn sharply up the sunk road which passed under his window, and so reach Knight Templar Street, which soon led him into the heart of the town, from which he diverged by Corn Lane to the school. Certainly his new route was preferable. Crossing the sunk road, he came at once by a flight of steps to the terrace, which is fringed by a row of pollard willows on the river side, while its other side is flanked by the face of the cliff, and, as you go further, by the gable ends of the old episcopal palace.

As Mr. Lane, morning after morning, at half past eight o'clock, strode along this strip of historic ground, thinking of the bishops and Wycliffe (who was cited to appear there for heresy) and Chaucer and John of Gaunt, a pretty couple, walking gayly side by side, and looking as if they thought it quite a joke to be out so early, passed and greeted him with smiles. Sometimes at this particular hour the wintry sun was glimmering above the bridge, in front of Mr. Lane, but in the backs of Albert and Janet. Sometimes a keen northerly wind made ice on the river margin. And, as ill luck would



"SHE TURNED TO LOOK AFTER HIM AS HE WENT."

have it, one morning rain was falling heavily. Still they came, smiling as usual, the lady clinging to her brother, and vainly seeking shelter under his slight umbrella. Mr Lane, having his goodly canopy of green gingham over his head, and the yellow stick in his hand, pressed it on the young lady's acceptance, and took himself off at a round trot.

She turned to look after him as he went. He looked like a giant in the falling rain. She staggered under the huge *umbra*, and nearly lost her balance as the wind swept

round an angle of the church-yard wall. Of one thing she was suddenly resolved—she would not give up the *umbra* to Albert or any body but him. Janet left off smiling, and began to look very serious; but her heart was joyful within her. Yet Mr. Lane had never even stopped to shake hands all those other mornings when the sun was shining or the wind blowing; and this morning all he said to her was, "Do have my gamp," and then ran off laughing. "Why did he laugh? Did he think it funny that I should have this dear old gamp, as he called it, a

second time? Has he quite forgotten that first time—so long, long ago? Why do I think of it, of him, so much? He is so lonely; and I know he is unhappy, though he won't say so. How I should like to talk to that old woman, that antediluvian old Ada, and to see his 'den,' as he calls it! I won't give up the gamp. No, I *won't*. He shall come and ask me for it if he wants it; and I will patch these holes in it, and sew an elastic band on."

All this ran through Janet's mind in a few moments. She was very happy, just because she and Mr. Lane had stood together for a moment in the seclusion of that great dome, with the waters falling round them, and cutting off them two from all the world besides.

The old scene which transpired so long ago was revived with twofold vividness. Rain-drops in the river; a wild shower thickening round her; a measured pulse, not of oars, but of unseen feet, coming to her from the unseen world. Then a shock of the heart, a space of sweet bewilderment; then the gloom of the great *umbra*, the rain beating upon it like rolling drums, and the splash, splash, drip, drip, all around.

The whole of Janet's simple life condensed itself into those two magic scenes, as a little fleecy vapor reaching dew-point, twinkles into crystal drops. Being accustomed to allow every small impulse and emotion to come upon her as it would, and have its sweet or bitter way with her, how could she struggle against this mighty influence which came upon her with Herculean force? As a giant might seize a child, it took her in its arms and whirled her away with blinding speed, she knew not whither. Matter faded from her cognizance. In fancy she was borne aloft, floating in a golden haze through purple depths of ether. In fact she was traipsing through the mud of Knight Templar Street, in the borough of Pedlington, and making a sad mess of her silken skirts, for both hands were occupied with Mr. Lane's gamp.

As they trudged along Albert tried to rally her, for he was by nature affectionate and communicative.

"What a queer fellow Mr. Lane is!" he shouted.

As no answer was vouchsafed to this suggestion, he presumed the noise of the falling rain dulled the sound of his voice, so he repeated the words in a higher key.

Still no answer.

"One hardly likes to call him 'Lane,' without the Mr., he's so stiff," continued Albert.

No answer.

"Rigid, you know, I mean, dear."

As talking very loud under these conditions was attended with much inconvenience, and as Janet took less notice of his observations than of the gusts of wind which met them at the street corners, which only availed to tighten her grasp on the handle of the *umbra* and deepen her seclusion under that canopy, Albert fell into a melancholy and desponding train of thought, and began in his metaphysical way to wonder why a Cipher should have to put up with positive annoyances such as mud and moisture, being either a negative quantity or no quantity at all. He was not quite sure under which of these definitions a Cipher fell, the mathematics having languished during his school-days at Pedlington. There were no Mr. Lanes in those days. Before this abstruse question was set at rest in his mind they arrived at the little green door of the paternal abode, upon the opening of which Janet, turning her back unceremoniously upon Albert, and evading the house-maid, ran boldly up stairs with the *umbra* before her, having the good fortune to reach her own room without being seen.

Her contemplative brother wiped his feet with much deliberation on the door-mat, removing every trace of mud from sides and toes and heels. Then placing his umbrella in the rack, he took off his great-coat and hat, suspended them on suitable pegs, and gave his boots a final rub on the sheep-skin at the foot of the stairs, in doing which he cast his eyes up, as if following Janet with their glance, and gently murmured to himself, "Oho! oho!"

Albert took his usual chair next to Nelly at precisely a quarter before nine, beaming upon the other members of his family with benevolent complacency. Janet coming in presently and taking her seat opposite, he nodded to her, and placed a forefinger on his lips, as much as to say, "We keep our own counsel about what happens during our walk." But Janet, making a great fuss and commotion in settling herself, vainly tried to look unconscious of Albert's semaphoric communications, for Joan's hawk eye from her ambush behind the urn had seen them plainly enough, and now saw Janet's conscious blush. "Aha! aha!" muttered Joan to herself.

A subject of interest, however, arose which

promised to draw attention away from Janet and her dangerous ally. In the first place, a ball was to be given at the Assembly Rooms on the following Monday night, to which Mrs. Browne and family were politely invited. But it happened that on the same day a lady, a very old friend of the family, was to arrive on a visit of some duration. After due discussion, it was therefore settled that Frank should escort his two younger sisters to the entertainment, placing them under the special care of Mrs. Canon Ormsby, the wife of a clergyman who flourished in an adjacent parish, and who (like Mr. Browne) had many olive-branches fresh and fair to look upon. The elders of the family would remain at home to welcome the coming guest.

The second phase of this question was still more important. There was to be a little dinner-party in honor of the guest on Tuesday, and "a few friends" over and above those who could be entertained at dinner were invited to drop in afterward and enjoy a little music. Robert, the adjutant, had been asked to come, but a letter had been received from him this morning regretting that he could not get away till Christmas-eve. The dining-table seated fourteen (with the extra leaf in). Seven ladies were complete, five gentlemen secured, and Frank had undertaken to invite "two fellows" to make up the complement of males. Albert always declined this responsibility with characteristic modesty, "the eldest son being in this case," he observed, "a Cipher."

More than one member of the family group wished that Dr. Phelps's name might figure on the list. He was a widower, young, handsome, and affluent, universally esteemed and beloved, except by a few religious zealots who considered his "views" to be "unsafe." Even these admitted that in all other respects he was a model of excellence; and his buoyant good humor, inexhaustible fund of calm reasoning power, and frequent sallies of genial wit made him no small acquisition to a dinner-table or drawing-room. The difficulty of inducing him to accept invitations during term-time also enhanced the value of his presence; and if a hostess could add to her other invitations "to meet Dr. Phelps and a few friends," she was safe from the risk of those "previous engagements" which so often cause perplexities in festive preparations. But, "charm he never so wisely," Walter Browne, Esq., would hearken no more to the voice of this

charmer. Cards, of course, had been exchanged when the Doctor first settled at Pedlington. They were followed up shortly by one of Mrs. Browne's nice little friendly dinners for fourteen. That good lady and most loving spouse had felt a little nervous at first, for her lord and master had reminded her that the new school-master had been (at Harrow) at once the victorious rival and the close friend of a certain nameless young man, the very memory of whom was gall and wormwood to his soul. But the charm of Mr. Phelps's manner and address carried these outworks instantly. He evidently gained ground rapidly in his host's esteem, and when the ladies left the gentlemen to their glass of port-wine, all was *coulour de rose*. When the magnum was finished, and the gentlemen repaired to the drawing-room, that frail porcelain cup of concord had been shattered. The smiles which still struggled to the surface of Mr. Browne's countenance were evidently born of courtesy, and had to do battle with the gloom which shrouded his mind. Dr. Phelps, either beguiled by his host's affability into thinking him more charitable and reasonable than he proved to be, or acting on the principle of "nothing venture, nothing have," had broached the forbidden subject, and requested the lawyer to enter with him into a dispassionate investigation of that old story about Miss Baily and his early friend Lyte, with a view to clearing away misconceptions, and arriving at a true and fair estimate of the conduct of all who were concerned in a certain disastrous event. The overture was made *sotto voce*, as was its abrupt rejection. Neither host nor guest ever related what had then passed between them. But the autocrat issued his interdict, and the loyal friend passed the threshold of Mr. Browne's house that night for the last time.

But to return to the breakfast-table on that rainy November morning: Mrs. Browne asked Frank whether his two gentlemen were coming to dinner on Tuesday.

"Fuller is coming," replied Frank, carelessly; "but I haven't heard from Lane yet." "Not heard yet?" cried Joan, in a shrill *crescendo*, with elevated eyebrows.

"Perhaps, sister," rejoined Frank, with provoking calmness, "if you were to drop him a line he might relieve our suspense." At which Joan paled with anger; for a legend was current among the younger members of the family to the effect that their mature sister had at first cast a favorable eye

upon the gentleman in question, and had failed to discern that his first attentions to her, as duenna or guardian of her younger sisters, were ceremonial and transient.

Hereupon Hubert rose to hasten away to school.

"I say, Hubert," said Frank, languidly, "just ask Mr. Lane whether he got a note from me yesterday, and say an answer will oblige."

"All right," said Hubert, and vanished.

But before he left the room the notion had got into form in Albert's brain that Janet had only taken the large *umbra* up stairs to prevent its being seen in the hall, and that she would like him to fetch it from concealment and tell Hubert quietly to return it.

Accordingly, clearing his throat three or four times in a dark and mysterious manner, and making spectral grimaces, he tried to catch Janet's eye in vain.

She knew what he was blundering about, and only looked down at her plate, beating the ground with an angry foot.

"Old noodle! old noodle!" she was whispering under her breath. And partly at the allusions to Mr. Lane, partly with anger, and partly with fear that Albert would attract attention to her, she blushed deeply, and a tear came unbidden to her eye.

Joan's hawk eye was fixed upon her. Joan's hand glided under a corner of the table, and was laid on mamma's hand. Mamma, following Joan's glance, saw Janet's confusion.

"You see," Frank went on, apparently seeing none of this by-play, every move of which was like an open map under his languishing eye—"you see, it's not altogether Lane's fault, my dear mother. *You* sent out your invitations on Monday. *I* had a great many letters to write on that day, and only sent mine on Tuesday evening. Fuller left his answer and a card and a whole string of polite inquiries yesterday; and probably that was the only thing the doughty warrior did worth speaking of the whole day. But Lane is a different sort of fellow. He's always head over ears in work—not in love, Janet—in work, you know; and perhaps hasn't had time to think about it yet."

"To think about it!" echoed Joan.

But no one responded to the echo. Mrs. Browne was still furtively watching Janet; and however father or mother might disparage Frank's energy in business, the whole family esteemed him (as indeed he was) a

prudent and accomplished man of the world. If Frank considered another man justified in neglecting to answer an invitation, they bowed to his superior judgment. Joan was inclined to rebel, but her protest died away in silent disapproval. Perhaps Mrs. Browne felt a moment's trepidation on the subject of the fourteenth guest at table, for, like most country hostesses, she dreaded the number thirteen; but Frank's authority set her mind at ease.

Janet's sororal affections underwent a sudden revulsion. She adored Frank. She detested that addle-pated, timid old Albert.

Was it by design on her part, or purely by accident? After breakfast, Janet, smarting under her imaginary wrongs, encountered Albert in the hall alone.

He felt disposed to evade this interview, but she cut off his retreat.

What could that have been? A sharp sound, as if you smote the fingers of one hand briskly on the palm of the other. SMACK! resounded through the house. Reverberations simulating the words, "*Old noodle! old noodle!*" confused the startled echoes. And while Janet turned and sped nimbly up stairs, Albert, with his hand to his cheek, retreated through the doorway which led to the offices.

"Whee-ee-ee-ee-u-u-u-u-u!" he whistled, half dismayed, half amused; and perching himself upon a tall stool in a dark corner of the clerks' office, ruminated upon the peril of Innovation, and the unsatisfactory nature of all Reform.

CHAPTER VIII.

CROSS-PURPOSES.

ON that same morning of which some events are chronicled in Chapter the Seventh Hubert Browne came hurrying into school at the last stroke of the bell, and elbowing his way up to Mr. Lane's desk, was about to deliver himself of his message.

Mr. Lane, seeing that his favorite rascal had something to say, supposed it was that he had brought back the *umbra*; but catching sight of the Doctor's face, already bent over his prayer-book under the great window, he waved Hubert off, saying, "Come to me at twelve."

By that time Hubert, having his mind set upon a furious bout of foot-ball, in which he fully purposed to become a stumbling-block

to the great champion of the opposing host, at risk of his own neck, and to bark the shins of one of that hero's chief henchmen then in enmity with him, Hubert, had forgotten all about Frank's unanswered note and the message to Mr. Lane, but remembered that Mr. Lane had summoned him. The latter also remembered his summons, but not that it had been suggested by an evident wish on the part of Hubert to communicate something.

At noon, accordingly, the pupil stood before his master's desk, and both being equally at a loss to know why, Mr. Lane put his hand on Hubert's shoulder and said, "Never mind your battle of Kilkenny just now. Come along with me, and we will walk round by the cliff together, and keep Martin waiting for five minutes. Let me see—you were at school with Martin, I suppose?"

"I came for one quarter, just as he was leaving," replied Hubert. "But that was in old Dr. Oldham's time, and papa wouldn't let me stay. He said the school wanted reform."

"I am surprised to hear that Mr. Browne advocated reform," said Mr. Lane, slyly.

"But he did," replied Hubert. "He said my going to school with Dr. Oldham was like my wearing his old swallow-tail for best. So I put it on one day for fun, and didn't I look a guy! But mamma took care not to let him see me in it."

"Did you like Martin?" asked Mr. Lane, as they walked briskly past the Fair Meadow and crossed the foot of the bridge to the cliff.

"Oh, I like him well enough," was the answer, with a peculiar emphasis on the pronoun.

Martin was at this time an elegant young man preparing for matriculation at Oxford. Superbly dressed, and delicately perfumed, he rode into Pedlington three times a week on a blood-horse for the purpose of reading with Mr. Lane. In other words, Martin, who had long enjoyed a slight acquaintance with the Brownes, had lately exhibited a strange propensity for presenting himself under favorable conditions wherever the presence of that interesting family might be anticipated. In the absence of the young ladies themselves, any person who took an interest in them, or had occasional access to them, was delectable to Martin. Mr. Lane and the classic authors, varied with a peep into the arcana of German literature, afforded Martin an excellent excuse for pervading

Pedlington. Mr. Lane was a famous fellow, a great athlete, and "no end of a scholar;" so Martin assured his parents, who were naturally anxious for his progress at this critical period of life. And now that Hubert Browne had been replaced at the Grammar School, and Mr. Lane was in daily contact with that celestial youth, Martin's affection for his tutor knew no bounds. Mounted grooms rode into the untrodden precincts of the old monastic building with hares or partridges for Mr. Lane; and before long that gentleman somewhat reluctantly found himself a guest at Plumstead Manor-house, the seat of William Culliford Martin, Esq., J.P., one of that very sagacious body to which Mr. Browne was clerk.

"We are pleased that Willie takes so kindly to his classics and German," Mr. Martin would say to Mr. Lane after dinner; the latter gentleman twisting his stiff anburn mustache dubiously, and Martin junior regarding him with fatuous complacency.

"He does not work as hard as I could wish," says Mr. Lane, doggedly.

"Now, Lane, that's too bad!" cries the pupil.

"He sits at his books very closely at home," continues the parent; "and I think he comes to you almost every day now."

"Four times a week, for one hour each time," insists Mr. Lane. "But what is that to the training of a public school? And consider the long interval of idleness to be made up for."

"I was not exactly idle after leaving Dr. Oldham," urged Martin; "I used to read a good deal of English literature, and some little French."

"Poetry, I suppose," Mr. Lane suggested.

"Well, yes; of course the English classics, Shakspeare, Spenser, Dryden, Pope, Wordsworth, and Tennyson," the pupil admitted.

"And Byron," added Mr. Lane, cynically. He had long since discovered traces of "the noble poet" in Martin's sentiments.

"Well, I admit to an infusion of Byron," said Martin.

But the elder gentleman hardly liked to think otherwise than that his son and heir was about to become a ripe scholar and a well-read gentleman. And certainly Mr. Lane was delicately situated.

One day in particular he was sorely urged by his native candor to betray this confiding pupil. Mr. Martin, who, despite his complacency, was nervously anxious about his only son, said to the tutor, taking advantage

of Willie's absence from the room, "I can hardly express to you, Sir, how pleased his mother and I are at Willie's strong regard for you and preference for your society. The decided taste which he develops for classical literature we consider entirely due to your judicious treatment. At his critical time of life a studious taste is inestimable—in-estimable. We were anxious about him before his acquaintance with you. He might have been forming some foolish attachment, or been led into a—a—indeed, I do not like to think of the dangers which might beset a young man situated as he is."

"And so impressionable and impulsive," added Mr. Lane.

"Just so, Sir, as you say. Dangers, indeed! Ah! dear me!"

And while the justice's imagination ran on to revel among the perils from which the heir of Plumstead Manor was being saved, Mr. Lane wondered uneasily whether an attachment to the daughter of a country solicitor (even with a little fortune) would not seem to Mr. Martin the most parlous of perils.

But to return to Mr. Lane and Hubert Browne, walking at noon from school to the abbey. At the foot of the terrace which skirted the cliff stood the boat-house. As they passed between it and the flotilla of boats moored beneath the willows, the boy said, "Do you remember what a lark it was that day when Nelly and Janet were trying to row, and you came up with your big ga—umbrella?"

"I did not come up in time to witness their efforts," said Mr. Lane. "Indeed, we heard the laughter, and staid back until the shower came on."

"They do squeal terribly when they're amused."

"I thought it pretty enough. *You* were rowing when we overhauled you."

"Ah, yes," pleaded Hubert; "a pair of long oars against a pair of short skulls. Not fair, you know. Besides, *you* hadn't taught me to row then. I never understood that dig at the beginning of the stroke which you get right off the stretcher before; and I don't believe a single soul on the Peddle does, at least hereabouts."

"The Doctor," suggested Mr. Lane.

"Ah!" replied this critical youth, "he does row a very pretty oar, and finishes up his stroke neatly; but he can't 'catch it at the beginning,' as you do."

"But you had passengers, you know, on that occasion, and we were flying light."

"I should think so," rejoined Hubert. "And precious heavy they are, too, though they don't look it. Janet weighs eight stone, and Nelly seven four. But Frank says it's Janet's purse that weighs down the scale against Nellie. She's an heiress, you know. Old Captain Lyte, who used to live at Box-tree Lodge, left her a lot of money, and Blanche too. But you should have heard the chaff at home that evening! Janet wanted to know who you were, and I told her you were the Marquis of Westminster, and Dr. Phelps Baron Rothschild. And she sucked it in. So did Nelly. Only Nelly found it out. She's sharper than Janet is! But I gammoned them at first that I was going to Pool Park with your umbrella, and—"

Here Hubert's recollections were so overpowering that he nearly choked himself with suppressed laughter. After spluttering for a moment he said, with an effort,

"Now you'll be angry with me."

"Not a bit of it," rejoined the master, cheerfully; "I don't think there was much harm in your joke. But don't tell me any more. Domestic confidences, you know."

But Hubert, not having blown off at football the steam generated in three hours of scholastic discipline, was bound to find another vent.

"Oh no, Mr. Lane," he rattled on, "I have no secrets from you. And I must say Janet is a brick, though they all talk so much about her peculiar temper and ways. And she can't bear Captain Fuller, with his spurs and his great clumsy compliments, which make her get so red and so hot, you know. And she only laughs at Martin, though he is such a tremendous swell, with his new clothes and his thorough-bred horse—and a regular brick, I must say, is Martin. He tipped me half a sovereign one day. Very good of him, but rather funny, was it not, Mr. Lane? Why, he was a fellow at school two years ago. And I suspect the governor would have been angry with me for taking it."

"Then why did you do so?"

"I hadn't time to think of it at that moment. And when I thought of running after him to give it back, I remembered that I owed three-and-sixpence at the pastry-cook's and my subscription to the cricket club. But, as I was saying, I'm sure Janet sneaks after you, Mr. Lane. She's always asking me

about you now, and *pretending not to care*; that's what makes me suspect. And mamma says she's so glad Frank has made a friend of you, and that she hopes he will imitate your energy. They think Frank shirks work, but he doesn't; only he has a lazy way of doing it, and never exerts himself when any one can see him. They don't understand Frank a bit. You would be astonished to know what strangers we brothers and sisters, and even parents and children, are to each other. But mamma says she wishes all the young men were like you, and that young men now are not at all what they used to be when she was young."

"You must really shut up, Hubert. Either this is all nonsense, or I ought not to listen to it."

"It is not telling tales," persisted Hubert, coloring warmly at this. "You have been a better friend to me than any one ever was before. They used to call me blockhead, and say I was as obstinate as a mule before you came. And mamma tells me to confide in you about every thing, and ask your advice—"

"But not about your sisters, Hubert."

"Well, I won't say another word about them, if you'll just let me talk freely to you about other things. But remember, I haven't said any thing unkind of them, and you told us it was no harm to speak of people if one could be sure of never speaking unkindly or suspiciously of them."

At this point of the conversation they encountered Willie Martin, in a seal-skin waistcoat and *chasseur de la garde* boots, caressing his leg with a gold-headed riding-whip.

"Ah, Mr. Lane," he sighed, "I was strolling about to meet you. How d'ye do, Browne? Hope the young ladies are quite well. Will they be at the Assembly Rooms on Monday night?"

"Two of them, I believe," replied Hubert, looking at the Apollo with a sly twinkle in his roguish eye.

Then Mr. Lane, accompanied by Martin, descended the steps, and crossed the sunk road to his solitary domain. No sooner had they seated themselves to work than Hubert's head appears in the doorway. "Oh, Mr. Lane, I quite forgot. Frank wants an answer to his letter," he blurted out, and then swiftly vanished.

Plunging his hand deep into a multitude of receptacles, Mr. Lane at last produced a letter in Frank's handwriting, dated three days previously. It ran as follows:

"Will you come to dinner at six next Tuesday? An old friend of ours, Miss Lyte, is coming to stay with us. She is a rather jolly old bird, and we always ask the *élite* to meet her. I have asked Fuller, who has known her more or less all his life, and who is a favorite of hers. The Rev. Adolphus Key, the new rector, is coming. He is a bachelor, and a mighty man of music; and in consequence, whenever the baize door is left open, strains of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Heller come creeping down the stairs, across the hall, along the passage, and into my devoted ears. *Parce, preceur!* I cry in vain. Nightmares and tarantulas are abroad; and no wonder *that* sonata is called *Appassionata*, considering the way in which it is being treated up stairs."

Short, simple, and playful as this note was, it yet fired three shots right into Mr. Lane's defenses. "Miss Lyte, Key, and Fuller," he thought; "and all in one room, too. Phelps was right. I ought to have braved it out at first, and not left myself to be caught masquerading. But then I should never have seen Her; for I could not have come here."

All this is quite enigmatic. I only record it as Mr. Lane related it afterward. He professes himself now never to be surprised at coincidences, so many having occurred in his own experience. That Mr. Phelps should have come to Pedlington, and so formed an irresistible attraction to him, that Captain Fuller should have exchanged into a regiment the dépôt of which was quartered at Pedlington, that the Rev. Adolphus Key should have attained to the rectory of that town, and that he, Mr. Lane, should (against his own will in the outset) have been drawn into a delightful intercourse with the family which was now about to receive Miss Lyte in addition to the two latter gentlemen as guests, were a series of coincidences that surpassed the apparent unrealities of fiction.

During Martin's lesson Mr. Lane was unusually preoccupied in mind, and though gravely disturbed and agitated by this note of Frank's, could not abstain from a sly humorous amusement with poor Martin's hopelessly enamored condition. His fair young cheek, innocent of all but the faintest down upon it, had flushed at meeting Hubert Browne, though he strove to bear himself manfully before that youth. Seeing that Mr. Lane had a letter from the house which was sacred to him by Janet's presence, how

Martin clung to Mr. Lane! How he strove to master and make his own Lane's rendering of that graceful ode the closing declaration of which is

"Dulce ridentem Lalagen amabo,
Dulce loquentem."

"I like that Sapphic metre," he observed, delicately, when the lesson was ended. "It seems to me the true language of—ah—the tender sentiment. Do you know, Mr. Lane, I have tried one or two little odes myself?"

"No!" said Lane, taking up a pen and writing hurriedly. "I am as much surprised as delighted to hear it. You poets are certainly born, not made. Why, you can't write a respectable paragraph of Latin prose, Sir; how dare you break out into Sapphics?"

Martin only smiled and blushed, but Mr. Lane, still writing, added, "As the spring throstle breaks out in song, I suppose." And the pupil, whether he fully saw the completeness of the allegory or not, was gratified with the imputation. Observing his tutor now, he noticed from the expression of his face, which was particularly calm and statuesque at such times, that he had recently come to a resolution of some importance, and Martin felt a gentle misgiving lest in some way it should concern him and oppose his passion. But Mr. Lane, who, as we know, was moved by a different consideration, still found leisure to think of Martin and his love, and whether his father would approve of it.

"Is your family a *very* old one?" he asked, abruptly, closing and sealing his note to Frank.

"Oh dear, no!" replied Martin, laughing and blushing, and turning away to find his gloves and whip. "My ancestors didn't come over with the Conqueror; they were corn factors in Mark Lane."

And Mr. Lane, for some reason best known to himself, gave a great grunt, at which poor Martin, taking it for scorn, and having heard that his tutor was "well connected," writhed in anguish, and loathed his own plebeian descent with quite an aristocratic fervor.

Mr. Lane, on the contrary, was relieved at the dissipation of those imaginary ancestors, who would have unconsciously been the *fons et origo mali*, had an aristocratic descendant of theirs lowered his crest to an attorney's daughter. So he restored Martin to bliss by saying that they would walk round together and leave his note at Frank's door. This was the note:

"I can not dine. Tuesday is my evening

at the night school. But I will look in shortly after nine, and beg for a cup of Miss Browne's Young Hyson. Pray pardon my neglect. Your note got into the left-hand pocket and lost itself."

The shining brass knocker on the pretty green door was barely lifted when it was snatched from Mr. Lane's hand by the door flying open, and—

"Impetuosity of the sex!" exclaimed Albert, within, performing deprecatory gestures. For, with his usual gallantry, he had just opened the door, and, with *her* usual elasticity, Janet was just bounding out, when a russet beard stopped the way, and she started back, accidentally stamping on Joan's toe. For Albert was taking the two ladies out a-shopping.

Mr. Lane, with Martin, drew back a little, so that the ladies came out, Sister writhing and smiling grimly at Mr. Lane as the cause of her agony.

Martin was in raptures. Joan smiled another sort of smile upon him, and bowed elegantly. Janet actually gave him her *bien gentée* little hand, and said what a long time it was since they had met!

Almost too happy to speak, as he allowed her beauty to fill his longing heart, he yet managed to inquire if she would be at the ball. She hoped so. Then might he be so happy? Yes, he might put her down for one waltz and a set, but not close together. She would keep her card open for him. And not that galop—just that little galop at the end? Well, if she staid so long, he might have the galop too. And might he send some flowers from Plumstead? But no. Janet was peremptory. If flowers came, her card should be filled from first to last without him. She was heartily delighted with this modest, well-bred admirer, and though she would not flirt with him, was glad to secure enough of his attention to assist her in dispensing with some which were apt to become irksome to her. To him, of course, the whole ball, with all the delights of anticipation and retrospect, centred in her. The food on which his joy would live being the two little dances, and what glancing of her eyes and glistening of her pearly teeth he might catch in those fleeting moments.

Meanwhile Albert asked Mr. Lane whether it was a favorable answer, and he, speaking more grandiloquently than he was wont to do, as is often the case with men when forming an important resolution, said, "I

am obliged to decline. An old engagement holds me." But he forgot to mention that he had spoken to Frank in the note about dropping in after dinner. Janet heard these words, and knew also that he would not be at the ball on Monday. Still she resolved to maintain a bold front.

Joan was rapidly advancing toward that bitter detestation of Mr. Lane which the "*spretæ injuria formæ*," and the cutting innuendoes which she had been subject to on account of her early partiality for him, would naturally engender in the bosom of mature virginity.

"So Mr. Lane has at last condescended to decline the invitation!" she now said to Albert, in a high-pitched, querulous voice, for Janet's special benefit. "What a strange expression he used! 'An old engagement holds me.' And he is one who measures his words, is that Mr. Lane. Now I should not wonder if that were true in more ways than one."

As Joan uttered the word "one" she closed her lips like a vise, as much as to say, "There, Miss Janet! There's a sting for your vanity! While you think all the men are dying for you, this Mr. Lane, whom you prefer, scorns your preference, and loves another girl."

But Janet carried her little head high, and assumed an elastic, jaunty gait, expressive of a "don't care" state of mind generally, and, in particular, derision for the emanations of Sister's pathetic soul. There was sadness in her gentle heart for all that, and her relentless enemy knew it.

Joan's anger was not the only peril which arose from negligence in opening Frank's letter. The decision at which he so hastily arrived of accepting the tail of the invitation was itself pregnant with danger. Had he perused the document on receipt, as he should have done, and taken time to consider the proposal contained, and all that depended on his action in the matter, he would probably have declined not only the invitation to dinner, for which he had a sufficient excuse, but for the later part of the evening, and would have resolved to abstain from visiting Frank or his relatives during the stay of that "rather jolly old bird, Miss Lyte."

One very prudent step Mr. Lane did take, having an unforeseen phase of his danger in view, and wishing to provide against it. He called upon his old acquaintance Captain Fuller, at the cavalry barracks, and, without

mentioning his intention of being present on Tuesday evening, cautioned the gallant captain against any verbal imprudence which might compromise him in a difficult position. He also "took the bull by the horns," as the saying is, and called upon the new rector, who received him very warmly, as a new parishioner of whom he had heard golden opinions, and whose acquaintance he was heartily glad to make. Having adopted these precautions, Mr. Lane awaited the future calmly, but still not altogether without apprehension of impending evil.

CHAPTER IX.

PROUD AS LUCIFER AND DARK AS EREBUS.

WHEN gentle Mrs. Browne plaintively remarked that she was doubtful as to what papa might think of "these new doings," she used the plural number advisedly, alluding not only to the monstrous innovation of walking before breakfast, but more obscurely to another change of doubtful tendency, which had crept almost imperceptibly into the practice of this well-regulated family. Mr. Browne, attended by the ladies of his family, worshiped in a district church which had been built in his part of the town. This edifice was of the Georgio-Palladian era, built of bricks, disguised inside and out with stucco, and lighted by means of tall sash-windows of the usual domestic pattern. Its interior was rendered at once elegant and commodious by a gallery which ran round three sides of the structure, like the dress circle at a theatre; and a handsome three-storied pulpit formed the grand centre of attraction. Walter Browne, Esq., was a very regular attendant at this place of worship, and expected his women-folk to be the same; but for many months past his expectations had been imperfectly fulfilled.

The old parish church, dedicated to the Holy Apostles, has been described as standing prominently on the brow of the cliff. It is a massive Gothic structure, and, having been designed for grand functions and pompous ecclesiastical processions, has a vast chancel and choir, extensive nave of seven spans, and broad aisles. The fourth seat in the northern aisle was facultied to Mr. Browne's house, which, before the other church was built, of course depended on the old one for spiritual ministrations. In this

seat Albert, Frank, and Hubert Browne were went to worship still, accompanied by Robert when on a visit to his family, and of late by Janet, who now affected to despise the rectangular "temple" (as Frank called it), and had been observed making efforts to peruse a hand-book of Gothic architecture and other works of a retrogressive character. It happened that the three front seats in this aisle were facultied to the Grammar School, and that Mr. Lane sat in the left-hand corner of the front seat.

A habit prevailed at Pedlington of entering the parish church by a door in the north wall of the choir, where, during the infrequent week-day services, the scanty congregation was easily accommodated in the stalls. But on Sunday the body of the church was filled; so those who went early sat in rows confronting those who came late. Every Sunday, just as the service was commencing, Albert, Frank, and Hubert would march down the choir steps, sweep to the right in front of the school seats, wheel to the left round Mr. Lane's corner, and so reach their own place in what seemed to them a quiet, unostentatious manner. After service they returned by the same way, again filing past Mr. Lane.

It must be said for this out-of-the-way angle of the church that those who worshiped there sat or knelt in the glow of a magnificent painted window which filled the wall at the eastern end of the aisle. Of late—at first occasionally, latterly more regularly—Mr. Lane had become aware of a graceful figure and a wave of delicately perfumed air attending his friends' arrival; and when he looked round from time to time at the boys behind him, the fair face of Janet, lit with tinted rays, closed the vista. At least he saw no further. Beauty such as hers, even with him, had power to arrest the eye, and say, "Thus far shalt thou come." But he averted his look, and went on with his prayer and praise. A poet-artist might have imagined this wayward girl unbonneted and seated under the gilded organ-pipes in full blaze of all the chancel windows, and so, crowning her golden hair with white roses, might have made a St. Cecilia of her, as many a Madonna has been made. But Mr. Lane put such foolish ideas away from him, and pursued his devout exercises. Yet was he growing accustomed to feel that she was near him in church, greeting him with happy smiles on the way to his daily task, and always present, though seldom speaking, in

that house which was his favorite resort in all the town.

The Brownes dined early on Sundays, as most good people do in Pedlington, and as no member of that family attended evening service at church, they were not sorry to see Mr. Lane drop in to their frugal supper, which he had now acquired quite a habit of doing. If there was any difference in his manner to Janet and to the others, it was merely that, as being younger, and therefore farther removed from him even than sister Joan, he made less attempts to converse with her. He used frankly to admit that, while he could understand and sympathize with, and generally win the confidence of, boys of all ages, young ladies from twelve to twenty-four years of age were a complete mystery to him, and that therefore they must pardon him if he seemed stiff or harsh or silent with the young ladies present. Then Nelly would laugh, and say he was always very agreeable to her, and papa would rally her, and say perhaps she was the exception to Mr. Lane's rule. Of course every rule had one exception. But Janet would be quite silent on such an occasion, her eyelids would be lowered, and the dark curling lashes motionless. Really Mr. Lane did often try to draw her into the common conversation, but it seldom availed. He talked too much upon abstract subjects, very often making almost all the talk himself, and only drawn out by affectionate appeals from the mother, or by half-sarcastic questions and inductions on the part of the eldest daughter. And when an abstract question was not on the *tapis*, the talk was seldom about individuals, and never degenerated into that harmless though personal gossip which is dear to women of all ages. On Sunday evening the conversation was often religious, and whatever Janet may have *thought* of Mr. Lane's theories and opinions, she *felt* they answered doubts and difficulties of her own, and that they were singularly unlike the rigid unreasonableness of her father's code. Mr. Browne, when he listened, which was not often, for he preferred his book, looked upon it all as harmless theorizing, very well for a single solitary man, who might range over the whole world of ideas and yet live an honest, upright life, but quite unsuited to the decorum and stability of family economy. Perhaps occasionally he was rather astonished and alarmed at a startling novelty; but knowing as he did that his children must sooner or later take wing from the pa-

ternal nest, and become more or less inoculated with other opinions than his, he thought it well that their first introduction to outlandish sentiments should be in company with a man whom he both liked and esteemed. Mr. Lane always treated the mother with more respect and consideration than her daughters. He never paid the girls any marked or conspicuous attention, never exchanged glances or smiles with them on any subject which was not spoken of openly *coram magistro*, and, above all, Mr. Browne felt quite sure that Lane was a man who had his way to win in the world, and that he had no idea of encumbering himself with a wife in that tollsome ascent. He also united with his wife in thinking that Mr. Lane's friendship had been of inestimable service to Hubert, and might have the indirect effect of infusing into Frank a dash of his energy and more vigorous habits of mind.

One Sunday evening Frank was absent. He had gone from home on the Friday, and was not to return till the following Monday morning. A great storm had been raging throughout the whole Sunday, but at about eight o'clock in the evening Mr. Lane appeared as usual. It happened that no one but Janet was in the drawing-room when he was shown in, and she was sitting on a footstool by the side of the fire, leaning her back and head against the white marble mullion.

"I *won't* get up for you, Mr. Lane," she said, putting out her warm little hand to him, "because I know you think me only a little girl who ought to behave properly."

"That's right," he said, quietly; "you know I sympathize with all rebels and disaffected people all over the world. It's a part of my creed to do so."

"Ah!" she thought to herself, but of course did not utter the thought, "with people all over the world; but if I were breaking my heart, he wouldn't think about *me*."

"What a dreadful storm it is!" she said, presently. "And how long it *has* lasted! It made me so sad last night to hear the wind howling in that terrible manner."

"Well it might," he replied. "And they tell me that last night or this morning early a large steamer from Bremen ran ashore at the mouth of the Peddle. She went to pieces, and all hands were lost before an effort to save them could be made."

Janet expressed her sympathy for the "poor things," and wondered whether there was a Dutch Jonah on board, and whether

they could have saved the ship by throwing him overboard to the white-bait. But she was thinking inwardly, "He does not care whether I was sad or not. He does not like me *the least bit*."

Then she resolved desperately to *make* him ask her for his umbrella. "It doesn't matter what he thinks of me *now*," she thought; then said, looking at him pointedly, "I can see you are quite wet, Mr. Lane. How very shocking! Had you not got an umbrella?"

In the mean while this big strong man had been quite dreading some allusion to his *umbra*. Since that morning on the cliff he had never seen it. He was attached to it from long service and many pleasing associations, and would not buy another. Consequently when it rained he allowed himself or his coat to get wet. To this arrangement he had little or no objection. And if Janet had mislaid and so lost his *umbra*, thinking it had been returned to him, or having forgotten all about it, she would be vexed to find out the state of the case; and he could not bear to inflict the least annoyance on her. But if, as he suspected, she was keeping it in sweet durance, he could do nothing honorably (he thought) but ignore the fact.

Now he was in presence of the enemy—actually under fire. The question was fired at him point-blank. His courage, as that of a true hero always does, rose to the occasion; but his chivalrous, watchful care of this lovely foe did not flag for an instant.

"I think I had a common old parachute once," he answered, looking at her, or rather into her, with such calm, forbearing eyes that her purpose nearly quailed. But his indifference had made her desperate. She would *make* him treat her like a human being, with at least gratitude and regard for one who had dealt kindly with her, and who had deserved so well of her by his services to Hubert.

"Think, Mr. Lane!" she urged. "You know you had. The dearest old nice large one. And you lent it to *me*."

Poor little Janet! She said those last words in a voice ringing with joy, and with triumph dancing in her eyes. But the knight of green gamp was not so easily overthrown.

"So I did," he said, still fixing upon her that calm, unwavering glance. "What a long time ago that was! You really were a little girl then. I don't think you were sixteen. You and Nelly couldn't have held it

between you if you had not rested the end of the handle on the seat of the boat. But I shall never be so gallant again. You are quite a woman now, as you say; and if I were to lend you an umbrella, the gossips would gossip about you. Besides which, *I have lost it, and don't intend to buy another.*"

Janet might have made another effort to retrieve the day if Mrs. Browne had not come in at that moment. But it is doubtful whether she would or no. Mr. Lane was so stern and yet so tender. He was thinking of her all the time, and fighting with her to secure the privilege of not seeming to think of her, and to secure her from the imputation of thinking about him, and still more of being thought a flirt. How noble he was! yet how invincible in his nobility! "Is it only possible, then," she thought, "to vanquish the weak—to have those at one's feet at whose feet one could not lie?"

"I assure you we were not flirting, Mrs. Browne," said the gentleman.

"No need of assurance," she replied, smiling.

"But what do you think we *were* doing? Quarreling."

"Quarreling? No," replied Mrs. Browne, incredulously shaking her head.

Then Janet, with her eyes full of tears, said, "Mr. Lane was scolding me for being saucy and bold, mamma. I am too self-willed; I know I am. But he is not as kind to me as he is to Hubert. He doesn't care for what *I* think or feel."

Then a little pause of utter astonishment on the mother's part and a deep wonder on Mr. Lane's part ensued, after which Janet brushed the tears away, rose up smiling like Hebe, and said, "I know papa is down stairs waiting for us to come to supper. Mr. Lane will give you his arm, mamma."

And off she ran, but turned at the head of the stairs with an arch smile, which alone would have slain any champion but this one, and said, "It was very kind of poor Mr. Lane to have come to-night, mamma, as it is so wet, and he has *no umbrella!* I was afraid he would not come to-night, as Frank is not at home."

That was Janet's Parthian arrow, shot as she retreated from the field. When they sat down to supper, conversation became general, and hostilities were not renewed. But added now to Mr. Lane's admiration for Janet, a profound and not at all unpleasant wonder at her strange behavior to him set-

led on his mind. Yet he was resolved to be even less kind to her than usual, and to show her as plainly as any negative course could do that her conduct was imprudent, and that he was displeased at it. "Poor little pet!" he thought to himself. "She is too playful, and too guileless of wrong. Some fellows would have taken advantage of her. I must give her a silent lesson in propriety." Accordingly, for many weeks he slighted her so pointedly that her mother noticed it, and said to her one evening, after Mr. Lane had left, "I fear you really have offended him, Janet." And Frank, overhearing this, and having himself noticed a want of his usual gentleness in Mr. Lane's manner to Janet, observed that he should have thought Lane too generous a fellow to be angry with a girl; at which Janet could restrain herself no longer, but burst into tears and left the room. When she reached the solitude of her own chamber, and had turned the key in the lock, she opened a cupboard door and peeped in ruefully at the *umbra*, which stood gravely in a corner, and, although carefully mended and patched by her hands, seemed to reproach her for levity and waywardness. "I don't care," she said to the inanimate object, shaking her head at it as if it were a sentient being—"I don't care. I sha'n't give you back until he asks for you. So he may get wet, and be as cross as he likes."

On the Sunday afternoon before Mrs. Browne's party, as Frank passed Mr. Lane after the service, he slipped a piece of paper into the latter's hand. "I am coming," the note said, "up to your rooms this evening, but don't stay at home if you have any engagement. F. B." In the evening, accordingly, Frank came, and found his friend writing.

"Ah!" he said; "I see. Writing letters. Don't let me interrupt you, but I hate writing letters; often have sixty or seventy to write in a week."

"I don't write as many in a year," said Mr. Lane. "No wonder you hate it. But I was not doing so just now. I was preparing a Greek Testament paper for my class."

They sat without talking for a while, and Frank fell to wondering, as he often did, what the secret of Lane's life could be. To a man of his sagacity and penetration the idea of some entanglement with a woman would have occurred in the case of almost any other man. But Lane's character and habits seemed to repel the supposition. Among all his acquaintances Frank had seen

no man who treated women with such courtly respect as Lane did; and yet in this was no tinge of what is commonly called gallantry. Even the old Ada, his housekeeper, was a member of a privileged sex, and treated as such. But that in some way, or for some reason, Lane had severed himself from his early friends, Frank was pretty sure. The Pedlingtonians had gradually arrived at a belief that Dr. Phelps and Mr. Lane were friends of old standing; and as to Captain Fuller, he had broken out one day with an assertion that he had known Lane for twenty years, and that he was "a devilish good fellow, and highly connected." When pressed for further information, he said that Mr. Lane was born in India, and early left an orphan; that he had been educated abroad, and had not cultivated his connections and acquaintances in England. In this latter statement the soldier did not adhere rigidly to the truth; for, though the subject of the conversation had completed his education in Germany, he and Captain Fuller had been school-fellows at Harrow, and being both powerful and impetuous youths, had kicked each other's shins and struggled together furiously over the foot-ball, and the armies on either side had paused, as in Homeric combats, to see the champions fight. Moreover, Mr. Lane's father and the captain's father having been brother officers and friends, the orphan school-boy was frequently invited to spend a part of his holidays at Rivermead, the Fullers' house, and these invitations had been most urgently renewed since Mr. Lane's return to England. "But he never went any where now," as the dragoon concisely expressed it.

Still, as Frank was forced to believe, Lane must have had some friends and connections in his youth as well as the Fullers; and if not, his cutting *them* was all the more strange. Who was the guardian who had brought him up? Oh, *he* was dead, was he, and his wife, and every one belonging to him! In short, Lane had been born and bred in the household of the man in the moon, and sent to Pedlington in a balloon, which had then returned, and so cut off his means of communication with his relatives. "No, Captain F., that won't do for yours truly, F. B. The truth is, Lane has quarreled with his family; and whichever is in the wrong, *he* will never give way. It would be easier to drag the old church off the cliff than to make *him* knuckle under. Don't you notice, Fuller, that religious men are always either pusil-

lanimous or proud? If they're soft-hearted fellows, they get soft-headed too; if they're made of tougher stuff, like our solitary friend, they get as proud as Lucifer and as dark as Erebus."

This dialogue and these reflections will throw some light upon Frank's view of Mr. Lane's position. We shall leave them sitting together over Lane's fire, because their conversation is too interesting for the end of a chapter.

CHAPTER X.

BEATING ABOUT THE BUSH.

WHEN Frank Browne felt any curiosity upon a subject, his habit was to talk all round it, casually as it were, and without apparent interest in it, yet hovering about it, so that an unwary interlocutor was sure to expose some of its secret places, especially as Frank's languid eyes, with their drooping lids, never looked more drowsy than as the critical moment was approaching. He was, however, too wary to sound a vigilant and susceptible man like Lane in this way, although some curiosity concerning such a mysterious friend was inevitable. Frank certainly might have cunningly extracted rather more from Captain Fuller than the plain-spoken warrior had already divulged, but thought it ungentlemanlike to "pump" a man about his friend's affairs. He had gone as far as to ask Fuller directly whether Lane had no private property, and Fuller answered without any restraint that he might have some little trifle saved out of his education fund, but that he was heir to a snug little property on the death of a relative who had passed middle life.

After the two strangely assorted friends had sat silently over Mr. Lane's fire for several minutes, Frank said again, as if he had been thinking of nothing else since last saying it:

"Yes, I hate writing letters. I'm sick of it. And, now I come to think of it, how you must hate boys!"

"No, I do not," replied the other, laughing at the idea, though somewhat gravely. "Boys are not like letters, written and never seen again."

"And then they pay so badly," continued Frank, "considering the labor you have with them. But in that respect you and I fare pretty much alike."

"But I assure you," Mr. Lane urged,

"that it's a great thing to watch a boy's character growing and expanding, and to help him to become honest and brave and generous. It more than requites the trouble."

"I dare say," replied Frank. "But that's a luxury to which I'm a stranger. And it's a new idea in Pedlington. The only rivalry between the master and me was which should hate the other worst."

"Now Hubert," continued Mr. Lane, "would blush at the thought of doing many things that he might have considered venial if no one had watched over his moral growth; and his mind is at any rate more receptive than it was a year or two ago."

"Yes," Frank replied, heartily, "he's getting on, and coming out too, is Hubert." Then, after a pause, "But you won't stay here long, I suppose?"

"Don't you think," asked the usher, "that the corporation would give me the Doctor's berth if he were to get promotion?"

"No," said Frank. "Much as they respect and as every one likes you, they couldn't do that unless you were in orders. We find they exceeded their powers last time. The trust-deed directs that the candidate selected must be a priest of the English Church, and must act as chaplain to the mayor and corporation. But they were resolved to have a good master, and broke the statute; and as it's a life appointment, Phelps can stay as long as he likes. But I'll tell you what, Lane; no doubt the archbishop would give you a title to orders, and you could qualify yourself for the head-mastership."

But Mr. Lane shook his head. "No, no," he said; "no climbing over the wall for me. But, seriously, I did not think of stepping into Phelps's shoes. My intention has been to complete three years of service here, and then go up and keep terms at Cambridge."

F. B. "What can you want of another degree?"

MR. LANE. "It is not exactly the degree which I want, but the opportunity of taking up a new course of study thoroughly for one thing, and a fellowship, if I can get it, for another."

F. B. "We could put a brief in your way on the home circuit, if you went to the bar."

MR. LANE. "Which promise I shall remind you of if I don't get a fellowship."

F. B. "Then you don't look forward to matrimony?"

MR. LANE. "No."

F. B. "Not if a nice girl with money fell in your way?"

MR. LANE. "Every man to his taste. My stomach would rebel at the poor girl's money, and it would be a bone of contention between us."

F. B. "I confess it would suit me. I should like to find just such a girl as Janet, with just such a snug little nest-egg."

"Now," Mr. Lane thought to himself, "this is a feeler," so he answered, very gravely: "I wish that young lady would find it in her heart to see Fuller with the eyes of half the other girls in Pedlington, to whom he appears a demi-god. If he were to marry, he would sell out and go and live at Rivermead, the most charming spot in Oxfordshire. You know his father is dead, and though his mother and sisters are there now, the place is his own."

F. B. "Would he propose?"

MR. LANE. "If he thought there was a chance."

F. B. "I know you wouldn't say so unless you were sure."

MR. LANE. "I *am* sure."

F. B. "I will sound her delicately, but I fear it's no go. I like Fuller too, very much, and think his wife will be a lucky girl. But no one can do any thing with Janet."

MR. LANE. "Fuller is the most generous and gentle man in the world. I believe he would treat his wife like a duchess."

"Evidently," thought Frank to himself, "Lane does not want Janet for himself. He is quite in earnest about Fuller; but I know nothing is to be done in that quarter."

In the mean time Mr. Lane, though he had spoken seriously and with deep interest about Fuller's regard for Janet, had been sorry to miss the opportunity of asking Frank (apropos of Phelps's name) why such an absence of all cordiality prevailed between his family and the Doctor. Phelps had refused to tell him, merely saying that no affinity existed between Mr. Browne and himself, and that they had had the good fortune to discover the want at their first meeting. Nevertheless he professed to respect Mr. Browne, and to think him "an honest, pig-headed Englishman."

Now Mr. Lane returned to the subject abruptly, and asked Frank why the acquaintance had dropped so suddenly.

"The truth is, my dear fellow," replied Frank, "that Phelps is interested in an infernal scoundrel who seduced and deserted a young lady closely connected with us. He

doubts the facts, but we know them to be facts. And this fellow, not contented with such an outrage, threatens (at least so we hear) to come back to England, and try to rob Blanche and Janet of their fortunes. Of course he can't do it. But he might give us a great deal of trouble. The governor had an attack of paralysis once, and we fear that any publicity about this affair would bring on another. However, Phelps was incautious enough to mention the fellow's name to my father, hoping, I suppose, to effect a reconciliation. The result was that the governor told my mother he never wished for Dr. Phelps's presence in his house again; and he never goes back from his word. You understand that we quite exonerate Phelps from any intention to hurt our feelings. And while I am on this painful subject, let me tell you that I fancy Janet's dislike to Captain Fuller is based on her belief that Fuller and this scoundrel were friends at Harrow, and that Fuller still has a sneaking regard for him. This is only a guess of mine, but I think it is so."

"What a dreadful story!" said Mr. Lane. "But what claim has the man to your sisters' fortune?"

"None, either in common law or equity; but he was Captain Lyte's nephew, and expected to be his heir. And there *are* black-guard solicitors, you know, Lane, who would contest the legality of the will."

"Thank you for explaining it all to me," said Mr. Lane. "I trust you will find the latter apprehension to be without foundation, at any rate."

"I hope so, I am sure," rejoined Frank. "It would kill the governor. And that would be a serious disaster to all of us just now. And I should be very sorry, though he has not used me well."

After another pause Frank turned to his host and said, "By-the-way, Lane, are you going to your friends at Christmas?"

And again it occurred to Mr. Lane that Frank was curious about him, and perhaps considered that confidence deserved confidence in return. He detested the secrecy which circumstances, or a mistaken view of his own position, had forced upon him, and was determined not to simulate a candor which he could not exercise. So he said, "Let you and me understand each other, Browne. I have no friends in England, except in Pedlington, whose friendship I can claim or avail myself of. My life here for two years and a half has been an open page

which any one may read. But there is a barrier between me and the past which I can not surmount. I tell you this plainly, because I feel it due to you. And now that you know it from my own lips, would you like me to withdraw from the acquaintance of your family?"

Frank was standing before a little old cracked pier-glass which stood on the mantel-shelf, curling his handsome brown whisker on his forefinger. Even this abrupt assault found him imperturbable. Looking at Lane with amused astonishment, he said, "Not at all, my dear fellow. Excuse me for seeming to pry into your affairs. I rather like a man to talk to me about my own sometimes. But what I was going to say was, my mother thought you might like to drop in as one of ourselves on Christmas-day, only I didn't know whether you would be here. We always have a grand feed on Christmas-day; and Robert is coming, and my sister Blanche, though I'm sorry to say her husband can not come."

Whatever Mr. Lane suffered, he was free from those coward qualms and eternally recurring suspicions of being suspected which haunt the timid wrong-doer. It was clear that Frank meant what he said, and that only. And under this sense of unmerited generosity two pictures rose before Mr. Lane's mental vision: one, the happy united family seated round their Christmas board; another, a solitary conscience-haunted man standing under a gaunt crucifix by a rain-beaten window, through which he dimly saw the old sexton half-buried in a re-opened grave on the opposite slope of the churchyard.

Another long pause occurred; then remembering that Frank would expect an answer, Mr. Lane said, "You are all very good, and Mrs. Browne is kindness itself, but I shall not be able to come."

As far as any emotion was visible in Frank's face or manner, he seemed utterly indifferent whether Lane would come or not, and, indeed, whether he cared to come or not.

"But we shall see you on Tuesday night," he said. "Fuller is coming to dinner, and Key. A curious coincidence, is it not? They were both school-fellows and contemporaries of Phelps at Harrow."

"Very curious. I will certainly drop in about nine o'clock. I have already made Key's acquaintance."

"There is a smack of crypts and confes-



"WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO WITHDRAW FROM THE ACQUAINTANCE OF YOUR FAMILY?"

sionals about our new rector," added Frank, "which is apt to give one a cold chill in a dark room. But he is organizing a choir, and introducing what he calls reforms right and left. We shall soon have 'a grand function,' as he calls it, instead of the old humdrum service at the parish church. And, what is more, he is a splendid pianist, and great in glees and madrigals. Haven't the girls been wiring into our poor old Collard for the last few days? That's all."

"I admire Key very much," said Mr. Lane, shortly. In truth, he did not care much to

discuss the new rector with Frank, because Key was one of those ecclesiastics who, even when partaking of secular amusements, seem to be inseparable from their sacred functions. Frank took rather a secular view of all such duties, whereas Lane held them in such high veneration, and was so much impressed by the devout earnestness with which Key discharged them, that he longed to have the young divine for a friend and counselor, and was casting about in his mind to see whether he could achieve this with safety.

Presently Frank reverted to the dinner question.

"Who do you think," he asked, "is to have your chair at dinner on Tuesday?"

Mr. Lane happening at that moment to be thinking about Mr. Key, and recalling certain associations which his advent to Pedlington revived, had forgotten poor Frank's existence, and had to be roused like one out of a dream.

"Upon my word, Lane, you are a thorough hermit," said Frank, good-naturedly. "You live and brood so much alone that I do believe you look upon shadows and airy nothings as realities, and upon live men and women as the very ghosts of nonentity. With you, women have no sentiment and no passions; men are so refined and idealized that you couldn't take their photograph."

"I beg your pardon, Frank," said the eremite, calling the man of the world for the first time by his Christian name. "Perhaps I am a fool; but I have sinned and suffered; and, as you see, I have striven hard to purge and purify myself."

Frank was really moved by this outburst. He spoke more earnestly and with more feeling than Mr. Lane had ever heard from his lips before. "Lane," he said, "how can you talk like that, man? Do you take Pedlington for Paradise, and me for a 'spirit of a just man made perfect'? What have you done that I haven't done—I mean of wrong? If your life and mine and that of any other three men in Pedlington were written in columns, I doubt whether yours would not be the cleanest story of the five. But now, who do you think is to represent you? I want you to guess, because it is such a joke. We all thought he was sweet upon Nelly. But that little gay deceiver Janet seems to have bagged this Plumstead partridge too."

"Then of course you mean Martin?"

"The same. The truth is that the governor is looking up the J. P.'s just now, and when he heard that I had failed with you, he expressed a wish that Martin should be asked."

Mr. Lane merely said, "I am sure he will be delighted to come."

And Frank went on: "He finds that young Delavine has been making interest with the Great Unpaid for the reversion of their clerkship, and wants to secure it for me at his death. But between you and me, Lane, I would rather be without it. There is only

one clerkship worth having, and that is the Peace. The governor let old Delavine slip into that, and the rest may go begging for aught I care."

"Martin is a gentlemanly, amiable young fellow," said Mr. Lane, trying to throw cold water on Frank's candor.

"Doesn't his laugh," Frank rejoined, "remind you of a young donkey braying? How will he do at Oxford? Have to avail himself of the pitchfork, I suppose. But of course you don't like to talk about pupils. It would be like our talking about clients. My brother Alfred, who died at the Cape, and who knew Phelps at Oxford, used to say that the dunces were pitchforked through the schools."

"Martin's mother is a very superior woman," Mr. Lane remarked. "And his father, though rather pompous, is a kind and honorable gentleman."

"Ye-es," drawled Frank. "You know how his father came in for that property. The grandfather was a corn dealer, or something of that kind, in Mark Lane, and used to buy hops of Squire Everington, whose son wanted to marry Blanche. The estate had been mortgaged time out of mind; and two or three years of glut in the hop market ruined the old squire. He and the son cut off the entail, and old Martin, who had bought up all the mortgages, stepped in."

"I suppose you see a good many estates changing hands?" Mr. Lane said.

And Frank replied: "Yes. Conveyancing is our legitimate business. Are you going to the ball to-morrow night?"

Surprised at the sudden change of subject, Mr. Lane merely said that he never went to balls, and should feel like a fish out of water at one.

Some further talk on this subject ensued, but it will be referred to in another chapter.

"Well, good-night, Lane," said Frank, rising.

"Good-night," said the other. "I'm sorry you can't smoke, as tobacco is my only incense offering."

And the lawyer went, leaving his mysterious friend under a heavy cloud.

As he went, Mr. Lane thought: "That man is more generous than I am, with all his worldliness. He talks without reserve, and freely admits me to his family, knowing there is a mystery about me. But surely there can be no danger in gazing on flowers."

What could Mr. Lane have meant? Of

course there can be no danger in gazing on flowers, unless the blossom of the upas lurks among them. But the school-master shrunk from following out this line of thought, and turning to his table, completed that Greek Testament paper upon which he was engaged when Frank came in.

CHAPTER XI.

DE GUSTIBUS NON EST DISPUTANDUM.

AS became the future head of a firm of old and fair repute, and also of a family whose respectability was a gem of the purest water, Frank Browne kept a watchful eye upon himself and his acquaintances. His regard for Mr. Lane, though as sincere as yours or mine might have been, was nevertheless subject to the surveillance of this orb. That Hubert was making rapid progress under Mr. Lane's tuition, and becoming manful under the influence of his friendship, Frank saw. Nor did he fail to observe that by these means his youngest brother would be able better to advance his own interests in life, and would avoid any serious risk of becoming a charge upon the firm. That Mr. Lane, without any vulgar egotism or self-assertion, caused himself to be respected wherever he went, Frank also saw, and felt that the acquaintance redounded to his own credit. The old saw, "*Noscitur a sociis*," never wears out. Mr. Lane, admired and desired by ladies and men, poor and rich, clerical and military, young and old, led Frank by the arm into a current of popular air. "*We always thought that young man had nothing in him*," the old ladies of Pedlington would remark, figuratively; "*but Mr. Lane could never put up with his society if it were so*. Evidently he was not appreciated in his own family, and rejoices at the opportunity of intercourse with a kindred spirit." "*A master spirit, I should say, my dear Mrs. Jey*," suggested another matron. "*The spirit of a master, at any rate*," facetiously rejoined the first speaker.

Moreover, even in the charmed circle of the Maison Browne, where the blind little god fluttered with felonious intent in the gauzy curtains, as they rippled like a silvery water-fall in the summer breeze, or lurked (in winter) about and among the substantial comforts of well-carpeted rooms, darkened by the heavy folds of crimson drapery, but lit with that joyous homely blaze which

makes an English home a temple and an English hearth an altar to the gods—even here Mr. Lane was never suspected of a suspicion of flirtation. Wherefore Frank reckoned him a safe friend for a man with good-looking sisters in a scandalous radical borough like Pedlington. And then the fact was not to be hastily rejected by a prudent calculator that men who do not flirt usually do marry sooner or later. Janet, beyond a doubt, with her face and fortune, might do better than marry Mr. Lane. Indeed, there was no marriage so high in the social scale as to be absolutely inaccessible to Janet, though for his part Frank thought Nelly a very living and breathing impersonation of Psyche, and far superior in mere beauty to her more fortunate sister. Yet, on the other hand, Janet, with her romantic, willful disposition, might form some preposterous attachment, and do much worse, both for herself and for Frank, than to marry his honest friend. Fuller evidently knew the secret of Lane's parentage, and declared him to be "*well connected*." This talismanic phrase counted for much with Frank. Captain Fuller himself belonging to a county family in Oxfordshire, and speaking of a man as "*well connected*," gave that man, so to speak, a patent of nobility. Frank knew too well that the same expression would not have been applied to *him* in the same quarter, and never would be, unless he should marry into an aristocratic circle; and even in such a case the term would strictly only apply to his children, and revert to him incidentally. And yet his father's brother was a squire, a small squire of a small parish, and less than his ancestors, the race in its descent having become "*small by degrees and gradually less*." But the blot on the escutcheon was that the uncle who intervened between Uncle Robert, the squire, and Walter Browne, Esq., solicitor, had become a tradesman; and Theodore Browne, Junior, the presumptive heir to the — estate, actually kept a tea warehouse somewhere in those regions delicately intimated in polite circles by the initial letters E. C. Frank Browne's vigilant eye grew dim with vain regret as he reflected upon this wrong done to his house. "*Why can't that fellow Lane*," he thought, indignantly, "*utilize his connections? What is the use of a man really having a clean 'escutcheon, and money in the background too, as Fuller says, unless he makes use of it? Why not make his sublime relations fork out? I would, in*

double-quick time. And why can not he enter at one of the Inns at once, and keep his terms, without muddling away time over another university degree? Surely he has foreign degrees (*and things*) enough. What is the good of all those degrees? I can't see that Alfred was any the better for his, except that he assumed a kind of superiority to all of us, and would scarcely open his mouth for fear we should not understand what he said. If Lane goes on at this rate, he will be forty before he ever sees a brief. Why, he must be hard upon thirty now. I am eight-and-twenty, and he seems much older than I am; while Janet is only eighteen. Oh yes, she is nineteen, though, and Nelly eighteen. These religious men are always as proud as Lucifer. Either his people have offended him, or he has offended them; and neither he nor they will give in (if they're pious too) till the crack of doom, and not then. I hate such folly. Why can't he be a sensible fellow, and avail himself of his opportunities? Splendid chances! I would back him through thick and thin. I can tell you what, B. (what does B. stand for?)—B. Lane, Esq., of Bohn and Gottingen, B.L., D.C.L., and Ph.D. (whatever that may be), it is not every ugly, grim, red-headed fellow who gets such a chance as I more than suspect you have got."

These calculations and musings of Frank were the burden of similar musings and calculations which passed through his mind at various times on the subject of his new friend. With Frank, feeling and calculation always went hand in hand, or rather, we should say, that from long habit feeling had become subservient to interest, and that he never allowed free scope to the former without carefully considering its relation to the latter. For example, it is incumbent upon this chronicler, with an eye to veracity, to admit that Frank Browne hated his brother Albert, yet not with that malignant hatred which would prompt a Mexican to use his stiletto, but with a genteel and even domestic kind of hatred, knowing that Albert would be, if absent, a permanent charge of two hundred a year on the profits of the firm. But Albert having the privilege of drawing two hundred net, or drawing one hundred and living at home, was counseled by Frank to adopt the latter course, which saved nearly seventy pounds a year, adding the value of Albert's services to the difference between the actual cost of his maintenance and the hundred pounds which he

annually resigned, for what he facetiously termed "the amenities of home." Again, Mr. Browne had insured his life heavily in favor of Mrs. Browne, thus securing to her an annuity for life, in which he directed that Joan (if still unmarried) should participate. But as this latter provision would, in any case, terminate with Mrs. Browne's life, it was still probable that sister Joan would be returned upon the hands of the firm. Pretty Nelly was a charge upon the same devoted enterprise of eighty pounds a year till married, and of fifty pounds a year for life after marriage. For tying up all which charges securely Frank entertained a hearty detestation of his respectable papa. To persons of a more excitable temperament it must remain a mystery how the father and son could abide together under the same roof. Yet they did so, had done so, and intended to do so until death should them part. Frank, however, took some credit to himself for not wishing to hasten that consummation. Talking to Mr. Lane one evening about the old parish church, and the changes which the new rector had introduced, he said, "One comfort is that now the choir will make such a row it will be immaterial whether any one miserable sinner responds or not. Some fellows think it necessary to repeat all the responses, like a parish clerk; I don't."

"I do," briefly rejoined Mr. Lane.

"Well," continued Frank, "there's no accounting for tastes. But how, my dear fellow, can I say that 'the burden of my sins is intolerable,' when they don't bother me half as much as one new act? Or how can I honestly call myself a 'miserable sinner,' when I never even wish to brain the governor?—and he has used me shamefully."

Mr. Lane gently suggested that the value of these phrases was relative, and that a lofty ideal of virtue induced a somewhat depreciatory view of one's own merits.

"I never did advocate crying 'Stinking fish!'" said Frank; "and if I had my own way with the liturgy, I should adopt some expressions a little more consistent with self-respect."

But Frank would scarcely have hated his father so cordially had it not been for that sore about his work. Mr. Browne had thought proper to bind Frank to certain payments after his death, in part because he chose not to curtail his establishment while his daughters were of marriageable age, and partly because, as the price of his admission

to the firm, Frank was duly called upon to make such payments. But Frank knew that his father had no wish to impoverish him by these charges, nor to reduce the firm to a lower rank in the rising generation. On the contrary, this very prospect soured the old Tory against the young Tory, the latter declaring that the Board of Guardians and the Turnpike Trust and the commissioners of all sorts of local institutions were a parcel of unblest radicals, and that he would chuck their clerkships into the gutter. It further leaked out that an aspiring young solicitor of contraband proclivities had been making interest among the justices of the peace for the reversion of their clerkship, which office Mr. Browne senior considered the crowning glory of his professional career, and was naturally anxious to secure for his son after him. Frank had heard of this mine, and had neglected to countermine, the truth being that he disliked all these clerkships, and thought that he saw his way so to increase the office-work as to be independent of them. But why should he exert himself to do so during his father's lifetime? "I am only to have two hundred pounds a year till he dies," Frank would say to a particular friend who was expostulating with him on this subject. "And what would be the use of my making money for him to put by for Albert, who will end by eloping with a scullery-maid and marrying her, and having nineteen children with harelips and no roofs to their mouths?"

But Frank extended his animosities no further. Perhaps he thought Joan a fool not to have married and got off his hands (prospectively) when she had her chance, and perhaps he despised her accordingly. He also thought his mother weak for conspiring with his father against him. But, for that matter, his opinion was that a wife should side with her husband in all things (his wrong being right for her), and Frank resolved that whenever he took a wife, that devoted lady should perform such a duty to him.

Robert, the soldier, was already comfortably provided for, Mr. Browne's elder brother, the territorial head of the family, having charged his paternal acres with an annuity of two hundred pounds a year for his military nephew. And though Hubert was an expense and a present burden on the finances of the house, yet Frank more than suspected that his father had a private purse laid aside for starting that young gentleman in life, so

careful had the good man always proved himself to leave his house in order if he should be called away. Moreover, Frank was proud of the boy, and liked him; for Hubert was bashful, ingenuous, and brave, and excelled in all the athletic sports of youth. To what extent Frank's generosity might have endowed his younger brother is doubtful, but, if necessary, he certainly would have played the elder brother's part with beneficence and conscious pride.

Nelly, too, was a permanent entry in Frank's good books. When he could spare the time, he was *almost* always pleased to take her where she would; for was she not both lady-like and beautiful? And was he not in some measure her patron and guardian? Yet he would caution her sagely, after one of her innocent skirmishes with the ruder sex, in which she invariably fought single-handed against odds.

"You shouldn't have too many fellows about you, my Nelly," he would say to her. "It keeps the best sort of fellows at a distance, and will make all the women mad if you don't drop it. That sort of thing is very well for a *débutante* for the first few months, as long as it's the fashion for every one to pet her. But you must pitch half of them overboard now. Depend upon it, a girl who goes about like a comet, with a ridiculous long tail of idiots, will never get a berth among the stars."

"Pray interpret, Mr. Oracle," says Nelly, demurely.

"I mean, dear, that a woman without birth or fortune who encourages more than one admirer at a time has very little chance of being *bien vue* in good society."

Perhaps Frank's pronunciation of the *vue* is not strictly Parisian. Perhaps his sister desires a little reprisal.

"*Bien* who?" she asks, innocently. "*Bien vous?* What does it mean, *M'sieu' Mentor?*"

"Oh, if you want lessons in colloquial French, you had better send for our linguist," Frank retorts.

"I will tell Mr. Lane what you say. See if I don't," Nelly rejoins. "I am sure he does not regard me in the light of a comet."

"If all the men were like Lane, my dear," Frank adds, "it would not matter so much. But some fellows have no dignity or reticence. If a pretty girl smiles upon them, they fancy they have made a conquest, and go and prattle about it. Then other girls get hold of the story. Then a lot of old cats (and pottering old men who are no better)

take up the cry, until the poor girl's name and fame are caterwauled over half the house-tops in the town."

But taking all things into consideration, Frank's fraternal affections inclined most toward Janet. She would never cost him a shilling; that was clear. Again, she would probably marry, and might happen to have no children, and to leave her money to his. At some future time she would probably take Joan off his hands, or even Nelly, if that little luminary should come to grief among the pitiless stars. A hundred things might happen. And in that other respect Janet was no comet. If she was a little too reserved with women, at least she held her own among men. No jackass could boast of *her* favor. Indeed, Frank had been much puzzled at her *poco curante* social airs, and at the absolute indifference with which she met the advances of her admirers, until he began to suspect her covert preference for his saturnine friend. At first, too, he only reckoned that a girlish freak, and thought, shrewdly enough, that her wish to be admired or noticed by Mr. Lane was provoked by his apparent unconsciousness of her charms. However that might be, Janet's manner was very nice, and quite up to Frank's ideal. Some persons objected to her silent habit, and set it down variously to pride, shyness, or stupidity. But Frank liked it. He objected to a woman who was "all jaw, like a sheep's head," and declared with emphasis that the highest gift the gods could bestow on a girl already endowed with beauty was the art of saying little gracefully. And then Janet made a rule of only dancing once with the same man at a ball. In any social difficulty she always appealed to Frank, and never disputed his sentence. She respected his opinion and enjoyed his little jokes, often slyly inventing an occasion for him to repeat the latter. At any moment she would pop on her tiny thimble and deftly mend his gloves. Jouvin hadn't a girl in his factory who could touch her. Every Monday she attended to the buttons on his shirts, which services seemed rather to be a pleasure than a burden to her. On one occasion she actually proposed to darn his socks; but that he forbade. He wouldn't have her delicacy of touch and handling degraded to such mechanic drudgery. Happy Frank! Here and there a husband would exchange his wife for such a sister. "A gem of sisters you are, my Janet," he would say to her. "I wonder what sort of wife you'll make!"

And once only she answered (and Frank, passing languidly to another subject, still pondered on the answer), "That depends upon whether I get *my husband* or no."

Après le bal. The Tuesday morning has arrived, the languid, washed-out, limp, pallid November morning, when (as the Reverend Melancthon Marmaduke elegantly expresses his dolorous sentiments on this subject)—when "the jaded votaries of Terpsichore silently regret those nocturnal excesses amid which they have pandered to the World, the Flesh, and the Devil." These penitent votaries have indeed submitted to the filial penance, and eaten a more or less hearty breakfast at 8.45 A.M. They have apologized to their guest, Miss Philadelphia Lyte, for that pandering to three Powers of Evil on the very evening of her arrival. They have explained to her that it was the first of the three great "Hunt Balls" of the season, from which no fair Pedlingtonian dares to absent herself, under penalty of omission from the future list. She has graciously condoned their offense, with a sly remark that the Pedlingtonian huntsmen used in her day to understand the conditions of a successful ball far too well to strike out such pretty names as those of Janet and Nelly Browne. And poor Frank is now—for business must be attended to—making his office toilet in his room, when he sees the reflection of Janet's face, somewhat sad, beside his own in the mirror. But this Adonis imperceptibly continues the disposition of his neck-tie. If the reflection were (supposing such a thing possible) that of a spectre, his languid utterance would neither fail nor falter.

"Dropped a shilling and picked up sixpence, Janet?" he calmly inquires.

A little fleeting smile passes over the reflection of Janet's face, leaving gloom as before.

"Ee—aw!" cries Frank, playfully drawing the first note in a shrill falsetto from the recesses of his stomach, and bawling out the second in a bronchial bass, at the same time beginning to operate on his scanty locks with a pair of ivory-backed hair-brushes.

"I wish you wouldn't," pleads a voice behind him, in a tone half of petulant anger, half amusement.

"Ah, but, my dear," urges Frank, willfully misunderstanding her—"ah, but, my dear, if my hair were in the smallest degree disheveled, we should lose the only client we

have left. And then what would become of Sister and Nelly and Berty?"

"Don't be redic'ulous," retorts Janet, with difficulty suppressing a laugh.

"Stoopid ball, was it not?" Frank asks.

"Odious!" she replies, with energy. "Odious! What did you try to make Mr. Martin tipsy for?"

"I!" exclaims Frank, in a tone of grievous injury. "It was Fuller. The ruffian! And then made me ashamed to be seen with him by laughing in that uproarious manner."

"I didn't see any thing to laugh at," says Janet.

"Nor did I," Frank quietly adds, still playing the elegant hair-brushes.

"Then why did you go on like that?" Janet inquires.

By way of answer Frank throws up his chin in a most asinine manner, and again cries, "Ee—aw!" so irresistibly that Janet fairly laughs against her will, and blushing delightfully. She knows that this bray is understood to be an imitation of Martin's laugh. And Martin, though only nineteen years of age, is an elegant young man, an only son, and is devoted to Janet.

Frank now turns his chair half round, and devotes considerable attention to his finger-nails, which he trims with an instrument of ivory. Looking up at Janet for a moment, quite casually, he adds, "No one you care about was there, I think?"

"I like Mr. Martin very much," says Janet.

"And if his voice is breaking, I see nothing to laugh at in that."

"And Fuller?" Frank inquires.

"Can't bear him," is the decided answer.

"Very distinguished officer," urges Frank.

"Man of good family. Nice little estate of his own down in Oxfordshire."

"Be quiet—do," is the strange remonstrance.

"Well," Frank replies, with resignation—

"well. *De gustibus non*. I can only say he admires you extravagantly, and is one of the few honest, straightforward, gentleman-like men in this nasty radical town."

"I don't know any thing about *gustibus*," says the young lady, with conspicuous veracity; "but I know I do not like Captain Fuller. And I wonder at your taste, Frank."

"I suppose you know that our mysterious friend Lane has known Fuller all his life, and has the very highest regard for him." As Frank says this, still in his drawling, careless way, he looks up from a favorite

finger-nail, and sees Janet blushing crimson. So he returns to the nail, giving her a minute's grace, then resumes, "Don't you wonder why Lane never shows himself at a ball?"

No answer.

"I fancied he thought it worldly, or unconverted, or some humbug of that kind," Frank continues.

"Is that it?" Janet asks, thoughtfully.

"Oh no. He says the girls get themselves up for admiration, and go there expressly to be admired, and to have things said to them which they don't believe, and wouldn't listen to elsewhere."

"I don't see any harm in looking nice now and then," Janet urges vaguely on behalf of her sex.

"No," Frank rejoins. "But going about admiring girls, and talking egregious nonsense to them, and hopping about like a pea on a hot shovel, is not in his line. It's all very well for me, as it is my duty to take care of you and Nelly. And it suits those fellows at the dépôt. But Lane has something else to think about."

"Does he dance?" the young lady inquires.

"I expect not," her brother says. "I hinted to him that you don't waltz badly, which you really do not, with a good partner."

"How redic'ulous you are, Frank!"

"I don't mean any thing, of course, you know," says Frank, languidly rising and apparently dropping the subject, now that his toilet was completed. But Janet, closing with him, and giving him a little affectionate pinch on the tender part of his arm, asks, "When you said that nonsense about me, what did Mr. Lane say?"

"He made a very striking observation."

"What was it?"

"One which proved to me what I have always thought, that Lane is a man of refined taste, and with a high appreciation of the beautiful and the graceful."

"Oh, what was it?"

"He stared at me point-blank, and said, 'In-deed!'"

At first Janet's high-pitched curiosity refuses to sink to this level. But gradually the cold, blank indifference of that dreamy word reveals itself to her mind. She sees in phantasy a vivid representation of the scene: Mr. Lane abstractedly gazing into space; Frank gracefully *posé*, introducing the subject (as it were) casually, speaking first about balls generally, then about dancing



"OH! AH! BY-THE-WAY, SHALL YOU LOOK PARTICULARLY NICE TO-NIGHT, JANET?"

generally, then about waltzing in particular, then of partners, good, bad, and indifferent, then of his own sisters as partners, lastly of her, Janet, as a good partner in the waltz. She sees Mr. Lane still gazing into space, thinking, or musing, on higher topics, but catching Frank's words and their import as in a dream, and supposing that courtesy demanded an answer, dreamily responding, "In-deed!" then continuing to muse on those higher topics, far away and above, out of Janet's reach, beyond her ken. "In-deed!"

She throws away Frank's arm, which a

moment before she was tenderly clinging to. "You provoking creature!" she cries.

Frank feels for his pretty *protégée*, but is resolved to warn her of impending danger. "Now that we *are* talking about Lane," he continues, as if the merest accident had brought that gentleman's name on the *tapis*, "I will tell you something else about him. He is not quite such a poor devil as people think. He will be well off some day. And, what is more to the purpose, he is well connected—a Devonshire Lane, I believe (Earl of Sandilands, you know, is the head of the

family). And our friend is much too proud to jump down your throat. Depend upon it, he will never marry a girl with money till he comes into his own, which may be a hundred years hence."

"Would he marry one *without*?" Janet asks, pensively.

"Doubtful," is the laconic answer. But the important ceremony of dressing for the office being now concluded to the lawyer's satisfaction, he lounges elegantly away, leaving Janet disconsolate, pouting, leaning back against his chest of drawers with a finger to her lip.

Turning at the head of the stairs, he just looks into his own room again, saying, languidly, "Oh! ah! By-the-way, shall you look particularly nice to-night, Janet?"

Starting into sudden emphasis, she replies, "No; I shall *not*."

A subtle smile flickers about Frank's countenance.

"I would, if I were you," he drawls. "The Old Bird" (by which term he designated their guest, Miss Lyte) likes to see every one spry and spruce. And, now I think of it, Lane is coming in for an hour this evening, if he's not stifled in the Ragged School first, or garroted on his way down here."

Was that "music from the spheres?" Janet's face is illuminated with joy.

"What did you say about being stifled?" she asks, running up to Frank, and again embracing the fraternal biceps.

"Oh, don't you know?" Frank explains. "Every Tuesday and Friday evening he slaves in a stinking school which some crack-brained radicals have established up by the barracks for all the scum of the town. I went there with him one evening to *smell* it. You couldn't *see* for the reek and steam of the damp ragamuffins. But I was obliged to send that suit of clothes to Westphalia to be fumigated. We occasionally favor some of Lane's aromatic pupils with an interview at Petty Sessions, you know. I thought Lane might have put them off for once. But, as I said before, there is no accounting for tastes. *De gustibus non.*"

The sagacious reader will have divined the lurking motive which brought Janet to her brother's room for a private interview, and will doubtless have noticed how warily that cold-blooded counselor had suffered her to approach the central topic, picking up her coveted scraps of information, and meanwhile revealing her secret heart to his vigilant eye.

Frank may go now. He has at length parted with his treasure, and left Janet passing rich in anticipation. Will she "look particularly nice to-night," as her brother advised? If we peruse the next chapter, we shall see.

Going straight to her maiden bower, Janet helps, or hinders, in "making the bed." Then she bustles the laughing house-maids out, locks the door, litters the chamber with drapery, gets her mind into a similar state of confusion, and sitting down in the midst of it, muses. She was wont to call such a mental process "thinking;" now she has adopted Mr. Lane's more accurate term, and calls it "musing."

First, of the Ragged School, as Frank calls it, though she has previously been given to understand that the "crack-brained radicals" in question call it a "night-school," and estimate that the work of the J. P.'s, and consequently of their clerk, Walter Browne, Esq., is diminished at Petty Sessions in a corresponding ratio to the increase of their demented labors. "How delightful," is Janet's reflection, "to go and teach poor dirty creatures for nothing!" Why is she not a man, that she too may do such noble things? Papa and Frank may sneer if they like. Will not those drops of knowledge fill the "cup of cold water" which Mr. Lane is giving to more than "one of these little ones," these poor sinners, in the name of One who himself was poor and unlearned? Janet's loving instinct is better than her father's and her brother's "fine old English" conservatism, wiser than their self-satisfied "worldly wisdom." But is there nothing which Janet can do? How trumperry her life must seem to Mr. Lane, with nothing to do but to "look nice" and be smiling and good-tempered, and not always succeeding even in that! The five intellectual Miseses Delavine, daughters of the Clerk of the Peace, teach in the Sunday-school, and two of them visit a district. "But papa says it is only to gossip and play with the curates. Rose and Clara Ormsby help to decorate their church. But Frank used to sneer at all that sort of thing before he began to like Clara. He used to say it was unbecoming for girls to do curates' and sextons' work, and ask if they would take to grave-digging next. I should like to help to decorate *our* church for Christmas. But Mr. Key has formed his committee now, and they would only laugh at me. Besides which, papa wouldn't let me go."

Then, in despair, Janet's mind gives up the desire for work, as if such a luxury were wholly out of reach in this world of compulsory idleness. Next she recalls what Frank said about Mr. Lane not marrying a girl with money, about his not dancing, about his indifference to her dancing well, his objection to going where girls go in search of admiration, to paying rapid compliments. And for each of these peculiarities peculiar Janet Browne respects Mr. Lane more than other men, but above all for his devotion to "the damp ragamuffins" of "the Ragged School."

At length she winds up her contemplation with a glance of coming triumph in her eye and a fixed resolve upon her lip.

"He *shall* admire me, though," she says to herself.

CHAPTER XII.

SPARRING.

THE eventful Tuesday evening having arrived, and dinner discussed by the select fourteen, the company now assembled in the drawing-room was the *élite* of Pedlington, as Frank had predicted in his note of invitation to Mr. Lane. Among the gentlemen were the Clerk of the Peace, a very tall, portentous man, who seemed to carry his figurative skeleton about with him in the same suit of clothes with his gaunt person, instead of leaving it in the traditional closet at home. Colloquially, this gentleman was spoken of in genteel society as "The Peace," but the unvarying perturbation of his aspect had induced the wags of Pedlington to call him "Peace where there is no peace." Indeed, our elegant acquaintance, Frank Browne, was accused of having invented this sarcasm, in his wrath at the best appointment in the county having gone to the Delavines instead of coming into his own firm. This angular and unattractive gentleman, besides being comfortably padded with five daughters, all more or less attractive, was admirably set off this evening in contrast with Captain Fuller, a knight of Balaklava, and a person of genial, inexhaustible simplicity. The clerical profession was in force, being represented by Mr. Ormsby, an honorary canon, and a Churchman of the old school; the Rev. Cyprian Key, the new rector of the mother parish, who belonged to the advanced school of Catholic Anglicans; and a curate of Evangelical views, attached to the "dry-dock"

church, in which Mr. Browne performed his exemplary devotions. A potentate darkly connected with a great brewing firm, but splendidly enriched by the said connection, also exhibited his proportions on Mrs. Browne's carpet. A physician in practice, a barrister out of practice, a political refugee, and our young friend Martin of Plumstead Manor completed the list of male guests. Some of these gentlemen had wives and daughters, some the former only, one the latter only, others neither.

Mrs. Browne's parties, though unassuming, were always more or less successful, partly owing to some abstruse skill of hers in sorting her guests, partly to her own inherent qualities as a hostess. Wherever this good lady went, envy and malice slunk away, and charity broke like a sunbeam on the heart. Not that she was enabled by her presence in one spot to exorcise those demons and shed that radiance throughout the room; but that by circulating among the company the enemy had to keep up a running fight, and do mischief only with his stern-chasers.

The party had fallen easily into groups. Three intellectual daughters of "The Peace" engaged the two younger divines and the ex-barrister. A fourth occupied the brewer, or rather the gentleman obscurely connected with malt, who was evidently plotting an escape, and directing piteous glances toward Nelly, who sat in a corner studiously contemplating the carpet. Frank flirted elegantly with the canon's musical daughter, a pale little woman with light hair and a white camellia nestling in it. Young Martin of Plumstead Manor was being talked to by his host, an honor seldom accorded to young or old, and in this instance feebly appreciated; for Martin fidgeted from foot to foot, eying Janet askance as she sat on the sofa with Mrs. Ormsby. In front of these ladies stood Captain Fuller, talking very loud in his artless way, enjoying Martin's predicament, thinking he had got the course clear of that inevitable "Mr. Lane" for once, and resolved to make the most of his opportunity. The refugee, a small, sallow, dapper personage, with a disproportionately large and purple mustache, was conversing fluently in French with Miss Lyte, a charming elderly lady, with much vivacity of countenance, and beautiful hands folded in her lap.

In the mean time Albert, bald, bland, "white-breasted, like the pard," but without the ferocity of that feline performer, hov-

ered about serenely, dropping a facetious pleasantry here, a neatly turned compliment there.

"You're as full of little civilities as a sausage is of meat," said Frank, sneering at him when they chanced to encounter. "A pity no one seems to appreciate you."

"Ah, well," sighed Albert, with comic resignation—"well, virtue is its own reward."

"Virtue, and two hundred a year for doing nothing," retorted Frank, with acrimony.

"Excuse me, Frank," pleaded the gentle Albert—"a hundred only while enjoying the amenities of home." And so speaking, without a touch of perceptible irony in voice or manner, he turned away from his unfraternal relative, and nursed his own increasing uneasiness. For Albert's misgivings had lately settled into a conviction that Janet cared rather too much for Mr. Lane. "Too much, if as yet only a little," he murmured to himself; "for when Janet begins she will go on, for good or evil. No power in heaven or earth will stop her. And who is Mr. Lane?"

A hundred times lately, by night and day, Albert had pondered on this question. He was conscious of, and had at first rebuked himself for, a secret and mysterious antagonism to the gentleman in question, whom almost every other member of his family conspired to honor. His perception of a mystery enshrouding Mr. Lane sprang out of this repulsion, which lately had grown upon Albert in despite of his own will, and now partook of the nature of horror. He had watched his father and Frank keenly, in his covert way, whenever Mr. Lane was present, or when his name was mentioned, to see whether any doubt or suspicion about him haunted their minds. Latterly he had more than once taken advantage of Janet's absence from a room to throw out a hint or feeler, but it had met with no response from either of these two vigilant and astute men. Neither did Mrs. Browne disclose the smallest uneasiness, although she undoubtedly noticed Janet's growing preference for the stranger. Joan was willing enough now to disparage Mr. Lane, to characterize his opinions as heterodox and dangerous, and himself as a person too reserved about his own experiences and antecedents for her taste. But Albert was not overwilling to accept Joan's alliance in this quest, for she was constantly subject to bitter innuendoes on the part of Frank, who declared she had practiced her mature arts of conquest on Mr.

Lane, and had been foiled. Moreover, there was so much generosity in Albert's nature that he hesitated to take an angry woman into an offensive alliance against a man who had done him no wrong, and might prove to be wholly undeserving of his suspicions. It was strange that on this very evening, when Albert thought that Mr. Lane was not to be present, he should have wished for his presence. In the first place, he was possessed with an ardent desire to witness the meeting between Miss Lyte and Mr. Lane; and in the second place, he was apprehensive that no such meeting would take place at all, and that Mr. Lane would contrive to avoid Miss Lyte altogether.

"Whatever the man's secret is," Albert reflected—"whatever Lane's secret is, Dr. Phelps and Captain Fuller are both in it. They know his whole history, and are both attached strongly to him. That is the strangest part of it. And certainly they were both at Harrow with that scamp! Assuredly Phelps and he were both friends and rivals in study. Nor does my memory deceive me in thinking that Fuller and he were rivals at foot-ball or some athletic pastime. We used to hear so much about him and his affairs before the rupture with Captain Lyte. But our new parson, the Reverend Cyprian Key, was at school with all that set, and Key certainly has not recognized Mr. Lane. I have observed him narrowly, and he is a man of transparent integrity. He would certainly cut that fellow's acquaintance. I heard him say that he accounted a duelist a deliberate murderer; and no man of his principle could possibly take up with a fellow who had violated the code of hospitality and betrayed an innocent girl. To Key undoubtedly Mr. Lane is Mr. Lane. Oh, what would I give to see him encounter Miss Lyte! She was too fond of her precious nephew, and too much cut up at all that happened, not to recognize him. Besides, she has an eagle eye. She always looks right into a person, and reads one's thoughts and feelings. She knows as well as possible that I am uneasy about Janet, and that I am brooding now. I saw her glance of inquiry when I passed her. As to Mr. Lane, he might even brave it out to her face. He is so deep, so impenetrable. I would give the world to see him brought face to face with her. If he were to look preternaturally calm and grave, my suspicions would be confirmed. And she would betray emotion—surprise first, then indig-

nation. But would she keep his secret? Can she possibly forgive him? After all, we have only heard one side of the story. We may be all wrong. George Baily entertained such a deadly hatred of that young man that he would not have hesitated to lay the paint on thick and heavy.

"But in any case," Albert continued, "it is too horrible to be true. I am getting morbid on the subject. I shudder to think of such a mischance. It can not be. Dr. Phelps would never have lent himself to such a hideous plot."

Thus poor Albert walked about among his mother's guests, seeming well at ease and lazily contented with every thing, mentally racked with apprehension, wringing his hands and gnashing his teeth with anguish.

At this point in his reflections he turned and found Mr. Lane standing at his elbow, greeting the Rev. Cyprian Key, who appeared rejoiced at the encounter. Albert's heart sank within him. Captain Fuller visibly started and stared, first at Mr. Lane, then at Miss Lyte. The rose deepened on Janet's cheek, and Mr. Lane saw this little signal, but was not pleased, and turned his eyes somewhat sadly away from the young lady.

Miss Lyte, whom a strange presentiment had warned of danger or of some great surprise, and who, penetrating Albert's calm exterior, had vaguely connected him and his terrors with the coming mystery, now found herself gazing with unusual intensity at a gentleman who had lately entered the room without being announced, and who appeared so much at home, or so desirous to attract no attention, that he did not seek the hostess to make his bow of ceremony.

With the exception of Mr. Delavine, "The Peace," this new-comer was the tallest man in the room; but, unlike that perturbed-looking functionary, his height appeared to be merely incidental to the natural power and dignity of his presence. Perhaps real dignity of aspect is only attained by those who are free from self-consciousness; and it was probably this entire absence of vanity or egotism, rather than any positive quality of heart, mind, or manner, which gave this grandeur to Mr. Lane's bearing. Standing beside Mr. Key he looked gigantic, but that was only from the force of contrast. His appearance would be more appropriately compared with that of his friend Captain Fuller. If you had met the latter walking alone in a country bridle-path, you would have been impelled to think, "What a fine,

tall, military-looking man!" Had you met Mr. Lane under the same conditions, no indication of strength, stature, or of the calling of the man would have arrested your observation, yet you would instinctively have turned to look after him, and a sense of having encountered a noble and upright man would arise in you.

What tumultuous rout of ideas, emotions, and sentiments chased each other through the lady's brain as she gazed at this person it is impossible to conjecture. After a few moments of surprised hesitation, a flash of certainty thrilled through her whole nature; and in its tremulous wake that indescribable confusion or rout took place, and so completely occupied her faculties that she continued to gaze and gaze (Albert watching her meanwhile), until Mrs. Browne, espying her favorite cavalier, rushed forward to greet him, and then turned, bringing the bronzed Barbarossa to be introduced to the lady who had already honored him with so much notice.

She was quite herself again by the time the ceremony was performed. But then, probably with a secret purpose, she trespassed the limits of strict propriety by repeating the name, and looking with keen scrutiny at the gentleman.

"Lane? Lane?" she reiterated; and again, "Lane? Lane? Lane? Let me see. Earl of Sandilands's family name. Devonshire family, is it not, *Mr. Lane?*"

"My ancestors on the father's side," replied he, "have been *men of Kent* as far back as I can trace them."

He seemed about to lapse into silence, at least to allow the lady to pursue her inquiry if she so pleased; but suddenly, with a hasty impulse, he added, "It happens, however, that my mother, though the daughter of a cadet branch, did belong to the Devonshire family;" which was strictly the case, as perhaps the lady already knew. But it appeared otherwise from her words.

"Indeed!" she rejoined. "That is very unusual. Quite a singular occurrence. Perhaps by that alliance two branches of the same original stock were reunited."

"I think not," said the gentleman, calmly, but politely.

"Well, perhaps not," Miss Lyte replied. And she looked at him very significantly, as who should say, "You are courageous and true, as of old."

His face, during this brief dialogue, was as the face of a flint—calm, cold, hard, and

immovable. Yet his eyes, which were dark and luminous, were looking into the lady's very soul, and reading every shade of emotion which crossed it.

Albert was completely mystified now. When first her glance lighted upon Mr. Lane, Miss Lyte's agitation had confirmed Albert's most terrible apprehensions. So perfect had been her subsequent self-control that he thought a closer inspection of Mr. Lane had dissipated her previous impression. He was profoundly puzzled, but infinitely relieved, and unburdened his gentle soul with a sigh.

Now Hubert comes up, and greets his tutor with looks easy to be read.

"Is the tea all gone?" the latter asks.

"The tepid water is," replied Hubert; "but I will go at once and have some real tea brewed for you. And you come into the morning-room presently and have it in peace. How tired you look!" And the boy lingered for a few moments, putting his hand affectionately on Mr. Lane's arm, as he had acquired the habit of doing. "You know, Miss Lyte," he added, "Mr. Lane is not contented with working all day in school, but *will* go and teach those soldiers and mechanics up at the night-school of an evening, instead of going out to dinner and enjoying himself." Then he took himself off to look after the "real tea" for his weary friend.

"Mr. Lane is of so little use in the world," said Mrs. Browne, with her sweet smile, "that he is trying to kill himself with work."

"Most men would die very hard if work killed them," he argued.

"We should spend and be spent in a good cause," said Miss Lyte; "but young people fancy their strength inexhaustible, and are tempted to overtask it."

"That is what I tell Albert," said Frank, stopping in front of the lady; "he should think of us and spare our feelings, and not wear himself out prematurely, as Lane is doing, who has no one to lament him."

"Frank ought to have been a soldier," sister Joan here chimed in. "A gentleman who lives in a glass house, and yet has the courage to throw stones, might lead a forlorn hope."

Frank, languidly turning his eye for a moment from Joan to Mr. Lane, repeated the last two words with aggravating calmness.

"Forlorn—hope," he sighed, and passed on, with a derisive smile.

Joan *would* provoke these passages of arms, and always suffered in consequence. There was such a malignant significance in Frank's

action that she even feared Mr. Lane himself would see her secret wound.

"But you don't call me a fanciful young person," that gentleman quietly resumed, answering Miss Lyte's last observation. "I am really twenty-nine years old, and having parted with youth and fancy when I was nineteen, feel now at least forty-nine."

"You certainly look older than you are," added Miss Lyte, speaking abstractedly and somewhat nervously; for though his face remained rigid, she could feel his steady, penetrating gaze, which not only seemed to her to read her perplexity, but to pity it.

Then he went to his tea, and she sat quite still, half awed by him, and wholly interested in him; and hearing as in a dream Joan's querulous voice, saying, "*We* have never heard Mr. Lane speak so much of himself in all the two years or more of our acquaintance with him."

"Perhaps, my dear," replied Mrs. Browne, "he is more communicative with gentlemen than with ladies. I have never heard Frank or Hubert notice any reserve on his part. But we must remember that a person who thinks and does so much for others is less likely to talk about himself than a selfish person is."

The Reverend Cyprian found the object of these remarks regaling himself with "real tea" in a small room, apart.

"You have not come up to the Rectory to spend a friendly evening with me yet," he said.

"You have not called upon me, I think," Mr. Lane replied, with a quaint smile.

"But you are not waiting for that, I know. How could I have the face to go and leave cards at the Abbey when I know you are at the school? I would have dropped in often after even-song, though, only I have seen you walk out of church as if you wished to be alone."

The reader should understand that matters were undergoing rapid changes in the mother parish of Pedlington. A surpliced choir and choral services had been organized by the new rector; and Mr. Lane now generally availed himself of the daily evening service to spend twenty-five minutes in devotion after his day's work. Mr. Key was waiting till a friend of his own should be at liberty to join him, and as yet had no permanent assistance in his parish work, which was very severe; so that both had the same excuse of fatigue to plead.

"The fact is," Mr. Lane continued, "I am

generally so weary of an evening that I am fit society for no one but myself. I revive a little after midnight, and my best hours are the small hours of the morning, which I must spend alone, as all the world is asleep then."

"Would it not rest your mind of an evening," Key asked, "to have some one to talk to? I quite long sometimes to hurry out of church after you and come over to your rooms for an hour."

"Then pray do so in future, or rather I will wait in the nave for you when I am going to be alone and at leisure. You know I have the English composition class twice a week at my den of an evening."

"When one is alone," urged Key, returning to that subject, "one thinks. There is so much to think about! And nothing fatigues the mind so much as solitary thinking."

"I seldom *think*," Mr. Lane rejoined. "I *muse*. Except in the face of a difficulty; and then thinking seldom helps me out of it."

Now Mr. Key's deep-set gray eyes glistened with delight, and he showed all his splendid white teeth triumphantly. "Ah!" he exclaimed. "This is what *Protestantism*, and your so-called *liberalism*, have brought you to."

"How so?" Mr. Lane asked, quite pleased with the other's enthusiasm, and smiling at his warmth.

"You liberals," explained the Catholic, "expect to think your own way out of a difficulty, like a solitary swimmer trying to save himself. But you have no land in view—*no land*, my friend." And again he showed his teeth in triumph.

"I beg your pardon," the other replied, thoughtfully. "When I am in a practical difficulty, the land which I have in view is the right thing to be done—right, in short. If the difficulty is an intellectual one, I have the truth in view. But being able to do right, or to find truth, is another thing. You may have land in view, and not be able to reach it."

"But what land is there without boundaries?" urged the divine. "And how can there be any rule of Right or any Truth, except within the limits of Sound Doctrine?"

"What is sound doctrine?" the layman asked, quite sincerely.

"What is truth?" quoth Pontius Pilate," replied the parson. "But to answer you as the time serves, Sound Doctrine is the coast-

line of Right and Truth. All beyond it is deep sea, and full of dangers."

"I shall be sincerely glad to make a landfall in your company, at a more convenient season," said the shipwrecked mariner, smiling gravely. And at that moment a deputation of ladies came to carry the reverend pilot off to the piano, while the other remained alone, helping himself to another cup of tea, and musing upon what had been said, wondering at the boldness and assurance of the youthful divine.

Although for argument's sake he had admitted the terms "Protestant" and "liberal," really his own mind was moving slowly but surely in the direction indicated by Key. Liberty of thought was assuming in his eyes the guise of license. The moral limits to this liberty seemed to recede farther and farther into space. It might and did lead men to infidelity and despair. He yearned for some repose from its fluctuations, some authority for Truth, some absolute Right.

That such are to be found by every man for himself in the sacred records Mr. Lane no longer believed. Upon that assertion arose an indiscriminate conflict of creeds. Catholic, Calvinist, and Unitarian each finds his truth there. All three can not be the truth, as all differ. How is an inquirer to choose, unless one can show his *authority*, the others none?

To a man's mind traveling over the disputed ground in this way evidence is not wanting of a commission given to a certain Body, and a promise that it should be guided into all spiritual truth, and that the truth should abide with it forever. He also finds on record warnings against usurpation of the authority vested in this Body or Church. Such was the case at the present time with Mr. Lane. That truth should be manifold or elastic was an idea wholly incompatible with the temper of his mind.

The rustle of a silken dress broke his reverie. Lifting up his fiery dark eyes, they encountered eyes of heavenly blue. A beatific vision indeed! Light, life, love. Light to the darkened heart. Life, warm, palpitating, generous life, to that living death, that hopeless brooding on "the days that are no more." Love, young, fresh, fair, and sweet, at whose very approach the heart's ice breaks up and melts, and living fountains gush forth to fertilize the arid soil. Love knocking at the door of a weary, solitary

heart; standing humbly without, a suppliant, waiting for admittance. And love in what form, what guise? The ideal of a lifetime become real. Every element of beauty, grace, and sweetness fused into one masterpiece. The absolute climax of nature's handiwork. The lily and rose wedded in human form, with sapphire windows to the longing soul within, and crowned as Queen of Beauty with a diadem of fleecy gold.

Shall the heart of a man bar its adamantine doors, and stop its ears with wax, that it hear not the beating of those gentle fingers without, and suffuse itself with its own darkness, and burrow deep down into the cold arid earth, and there grovel for death, dark death, the final pang, the parting throes, to end its loveless agony?

We must leave Mr. Lane's course of action in this trying emergence "to develop itself," as the newspaper writers say, in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XIII.

LOOKING NICE.

WE left Mr. Lane disturbed as to his reverie by the rustle of a silken dress. His mind had been occupied with one of those great vexed questions which have agitated the intellectual world at least from the days of Wycliffe till now. Who shall say how much of this mental fermentation is not a mere anodyne instinctively sought and eagerly drunk to allay the craving of empty hearts? Such a proposition is far too profound to be more than delicately hinted at in the progress of our narrative. Suffice it to say that, meeting the gentle, hesitating gaze of a pair of deep blue eyes, Mr. Lane's dark splendid eyes were suffused with a light which is not that of the intellect, and in his heart arose a gentle murmur which stilled the thunders of polemic controversy.

The young lady was blushing, not unnaturally, at finding herself quite unsupported, and apparently intruding upon the solitude of a grave gentleman, who sought the seclusion of this deserted room, and soled his weary soul with tea. A slight tremor passed over her lips, as though she would fain have excused herself for being there. Yet such an excuse, if spoken, would have been the mere shadow of a conventionalism; for she felt, and trembled all over at that sense, that her very presence was a joy to this man.

Janet's dress was of black gauze over some thin black silk. Her only ornaments were a rude necklace and crucifix of Irish bog-wood, and two hair-pins or skewers of the same fabric. "*Simplex munditiis.*" This simplicity was not devoid of art. And if my fair reader will recall the image of some surpassingly fair and lovely girl (perchance herself) attired in such a robe of subdued black, her memory will supply my lack of descriptive power. The cumbrous dull black beads, too, aided in setting off her small round neck and white bosom. The large black knobs of the pins also appeared to nestle furtively amidst the clusters of glistening hair, which, densely massed behind, and growing low on her forehead, sat like a crown of fretted gold and amber upon her dainty head.

As her eyelids fell before his glance he noticed for the first time how her dark, delicate eyebrows contrasted with the fair skin and golden hair, and how the lids of those eloquent eyes were fringed with long dark lashes.

It was a silent *tête-à-tête*. Neither he nor she uttered a syllable. Nor did he attempt to rise and offer her a seat. Nor did she expect him to do so. Nor was she conscious of any embarrassment in this silence. Following or urged by some blind impulse, she had sought him thus. During all those hours which had intervened since her conversation with Frank at his toilet one idea had possessed her mind: it was that Mr. Lane's heart was void and sad, and that she would command his admiration, and so win the right to fill and solace it.

I challenge any fair criticism to denounce this idea, to asperse this resolution of hers. The idea was founded in purest charity. The resolution was entirely noble and self-sacrificing. This man before whom she stood trembling, waiting for his heart to pronounce her sentence, had nothing which the world covets to bestow upon her—neither fame nor position, rank nor wealth. Only she thought him one of nature's true nobility, sad because of manifold bitter experiences, and because of the sadness which will sink into all noble souls as they study and strive with the evil which prevails around them. Moreover, she thought, and wisely thought, that such strong natures, capable of so great devotion to the interests of others, are also profoundly tender, and desire (even though they know it not) both to give and to receive an amplitude of love which feebler souls can not fathom. To

supply this great want to the man before her—this man whom she already esteemed great in all but the world's recognition—to help him with her love, with her whole soul, and even with her little fortune, if such petty aid would be accepted, to march triumphant over all obstacles, to attain the summit of human success, and, far above all this, to be happy, was her desire. And with her to desire strongly was to resolve.

So there she stood, a sweet, silent suppliant, with downcast lids and palpitating breast, waiting to know whether her beauty and devotion were enough, to hear from his lips or see in his eyes a token of approval, of acceptance.

But he remained silent, toying with his tea-spoon, and looking up at her, half dazzled by her beauty, half saddened by his own seclusion, his own doom of living or dying unblest with such a bride, unable to receive so bounteous a gift.

Then Nelly came fluttering in, a little fleecy cloud of white tulle and sky-blue ribbons, seeking Janet, she said, and surprised to find Mr. Lane there. But as she had found him, she would tell him how Frank had been disparaging her. And, after all, she was Janet's favorite sister, and knew that Mr. Lane did not quite detest or despise her. Thus the sly damsel implied a superior regard on his part for Janet, and believed in her heart that the grave man loved her peculiar sister, though she thought him too proud and solemn to acknowledge himself a captive in Love's triumph. Pretending not to understand her brother's French, she asked Mr. Lane to explain "*bien vue*;" and he, supposing that she must understand it, replied, evasively, that it was something men cared a great deal too much about. He couldn't answer for the fair sex, but fancied vaguely that Mrs. Grundy was even more terrible to them.

"I don't think I care much about her," said Janet.

Looking at her again, Mr. Lane saw in her eye a flash of defiance, and recognizing that she had indeed the very courage in which he thought most of her sex to be deficient, admired this doubtful quality in her who already seemed so admirable. But again he refrained from addressing her, and asked why Frank was so severe upon Nelly, who replied, penitently, that she was denounced as a flirt.

"You never flirt with me," said Mr. Lane, simply.

"And am I *bien vue* with you?" she asked.

"It seems to me that you are so with every one," he answered, vaguely.

"And not *me*?" asked Janet, piqued into attracting some little attention to herself, and wholly regardless of grammatical proprieties.

"But *you* are indifferent on the subject," he answered, renewing that glance of approval with which he had greeted her defiance of Dame Grundy.

It was evident to him, though Janet had many admirers, and was, indeed, destined to have more devotees among the ruder sex than Nelly, that the latter young lady was already the favorite among ladies. And he knew that those who are careless of pleasing seldom become popular.

But this thought, isolating Janet, as it were, from the rest of the world, or rather from her natural allies, seemed to set her apart for him. Again he regarded her, unconsciously recognizing in his expression her singular beauty. A portion of his satisfaction escaped in this unguarded moment, and penetrated to Janet's heart, which thrilled with delight. Her face kindled anew with conscious victory. The little pearly teeth glistened between the opening lips. Under the long dark lashes again the blue lights flashed, and through those windows Mr. Lane saw clearly the joy within her.

"I don't care whether *they* like me or not," she said.

They looked at each other silently again; and it must be admitted, though he paid her no spoken compliment, nor even uttered a word of approval, that his eyes expressed the admiration which welled up from all the secret and suppressed sources of his nature. Nelly watched them curiously meanwhile; and Mr. Lane, recovering himself as if from some ecstasy, and rising from his chair, asked if they should return to the drawing-room, which they at once proceeded to do.

The Reverend Cyprion was singing a wild song, fraught with melancholy. It was Schubert's *Wanderer*. Janet felt rather than saw that the shadow of sadness had again fallen upon Mr. Lane. She thought of a mysterious phrase which Albert had recently used when speaking to her about Mr. Lane. It was something about experiences unlike those of other men having in all likelihood been the cause of his peculiarity. She had been indignant at the time, not thinking Albert worthy to discuss one so greatly his superior. But her own generous

sympathy for him told her own heart that she did really hold Mr. Lane more needful of sympathy than other men, and did consider his experience both past and present as setting him apart, in a measure, from his fellows.

Being now called upon to take her turn at the piano, which Janet sincerely dreaded, though knowing it inevitable, she passed over all those classical sonatas, fugues, and symphonies which alone were deemed worthy of Mr. Key's attention, and selected *Home, sweet Home*. Simple Janet! She knew this air to be a favorite with Mr. Lane, and little thought how terrible to his severe taste her Thalbergian version of it might be. She thought to charm away his melancholy; and he stood by her, like a warrior under fire. As she descended toward the end of the second page, a swarthy, sinewy hand, scarred with two old cuts, passed from her left side above the music, and turned the leaf. She knew the "old hand," as she called it to herself. Well she knew the two ancient scars, which looked as if they might have been inflicted while it was still uncertain whether her spirit was to be accommodated with its present fair tabernacle or with some lump of hoydenish clay. He was at her side, listening to, admiring, perhaps loving her. There is something quaint and almost sad in her romantic worship of this grave man who was neither rich, noble, famous, handsome, nor young. At least two other men, at this very moment in the room, would give their right hands for one such look as she had just lavished on Mr. Lane. As Frank truly said, there was no alliance to which she might not aspire. Rich, young, coy as a March snow-flake, accomplished, not ill-bred, and surpassingly beautiful, she seemed as if cunningly contrived by art and nature only to be seen and loved. Yet she aspired to nothing but that brown, sinewy "old hand," and the heart which she knew would be given unreservedly before it ever would clasp a woman to his breast.

She played on, as in a dream. But the music, such as it was, required not only all her skill but close attention, for a wizard's pen had transformed the homely ballad into bewildering mazes and tortuous zigzag staircases, in the rapid descent of one of which the fair pianiste stumbled and—broke down.

"Bravo!" cried Captain Fuller, coming gallantly to the rescue. "Capit'ly executed, 'pon my word! Awfully difficult thing! Every body who plays it goes a cropper

there. Arabella Goddard did once at St. James's Hall. It's inevitable."

Mr. Key also urged her pleasantly to renewed efforts; and Mr. Lane said, quietly, "Come, you don't care what they think about you." So the young lady again plunged into the vortex, and came out at the grand *finale* with considerable *clat*.

"Really," said Miss Lyte to her hostess, "an ill-natured person might think Janet had failed intentionally. It attracts so much sympathy from the gentlemen."

And Mrs. Browne replied, smiling, but with a little sigh, "She cares too little what most people think about her; but I *am* surprised at her not taking more pains when Mr. Lane was listening."

"Is he a severe critic, then?" the guest inquired.

"No; but we *all* like to be *au mieux* before Mr. Lane." And Mrs. Browne emphasized the word "all," as if she would imply that what was true of them all was especially true of Janet in this instance.

Shortly afterward Miss Lyte was conversing with her old acquaintance, Captain Fuller, and asking him about Watermead and the various members of his family, when she turned upon him suddenly, and said, "Does not Mr. Lane remind you a little of one who used to be a friend of yours in old days?"

"Yes," he replied, speaking in a lower tone than usual, but with much warmth; "very much, and very often, of one of the truest friends and best fellows I ever knew."

"Still?" she inquired, in a scarcely audible murmur, but looking at him more intently.

"Still and always," he replied, returning her look steadily. "But I see much less of Lane than I could wish, for I was not here in his vacation; and he lives so far from the *dépôt*, and is always so heavily engaged, that one can seldom get hold of him."

"Is he very gay, then?" the lady asked. She seemed to take a peculiar interest in Mr. Lane.

"Oh no," said Fuller; "he seldom goes out to parties, even to houses where he is quite at home. I mean heavily engaged with his various kinds of work and the services he is always rendering to some one or other. He has only dined once at the barracks; and two or three times, when I have looked him up of an evening, I have found him so tired and preoccupied that the only

friendly thing to be done was to go away and leave him to his solitary pipe."

"Does he smoke much?" the lady asked.

"Never has a pipe out of his mouth when he is alone."

Again turning suddenly upon the captain, and using the name by which she had been wont to call him in boyhood, Miss Lyte said, "Robert, which of those two pretty girls do you admire?" And so saying, she indicated Janet and Nelly with a glance.

The gentleman only turned his eyes for a moment toward Janet, lowered them to Miss Lyte's face, and then to the ground.

"I thought so," she murmured. "And Janet?"

Again the gallant soldier raised his eyes; but this time turned them in the direction of Mr. Lane, who appeared to have fallen an unwilling captive into the snares of an intellectual young lady.

"These *are* revelations!" said Miss Lyte, although Captain Fuller had uttered not a word in answer to her last two questions. Then she asked, abruptly, "When are you going to join your new regiment in India?"

And he answered, "I might as well go to-morrow as to stay here for twenty years."

When Mr. Lane came to bid his hostess good-night, he started imperceptibly at the sight of this benevolent lady who had shown so much interest in him. He had entirely forgotten her presence, but managed to conceal his emotion, and to make her a stately bow, again regarding her with that calm scrutiny which caused her to feel that he could read her thoughts without betraying his own.

Nelly and Janet each gave him a hand at the drawing-room door. What harm could there be in gazing at flowers? And if one blossom be divinely beautiful and of subtlest fragrance, is danger lurking among its rosy petals? Must the beholder shun that which is so fair, so sweet—reject that which offers to satisfy all the occult yearnings of a hungry soul? Strangely near to happiness a man is perhaps drawn when it is about to pass forever out of his reach. A verdant glen, watered with crystal fountains; the air filled with the cooing of doves and soft whispering of trembling leaves; the ground a very couch of yielding moss: such an oasis hovers for a few brief moments in the mirage of the mind, and swiftly disappears, when before, behind, and all around the wayfarer, parched and weary, extend the arid sands of life, the homeless, trackless desert.

As Mr. Lane took this fair girl's hand in

his, strong Love overbore him. In his heart he yielded. He desired her with unutterable longing. He told himself that it was so. And this admission was their doom of separation.

* * * * *

Janet went up to her room and locked the door. Out came the big black hair-pins, and down came the golden canopy of tresses. Again the gentle girl sat alone before her mirror, seeing herself only, and herself as she now trusted she seemed in the eyes of one other. "He does admire me," she murmured softly to herself; "he does care for me." And again, as all the various objections to these two propositions rose and were disposed of by recent evidence, she insisted to herself, "He *does* admire me; he *does* care for me."

That which had been to her formerly a source of grief and humiliation now began to give her exquisite delight: that he had often been to the house, but seldom spoken to her singly, or appeared to take much notice of her, though to others he could talk without reserve. Even to-night he had paid her no compliment. "And yet—and yet," she thought, "I could see in his eyes what he would not say. It came there in his own despite; I know it did. And he was standing close by my side, and felt for me, and understood what a dreadful thing it was to break down like that when he was looking on."

Over the shame, despair, and struggle of that terrible moment her mind ran back with dramatic vividness, and over the victory, the joy which had succeeded to the anguish. Looking defiantly at her own pretty reflection in the glass, she said, "I don't care. I *shall* break down 'f I like." And she nodded defiance at her double.

Then her thought ran on in the former groove. "Why is he always so strangely reserved in his manner to me? And why won't he ask me for his poor dear old gamp? Frank says he is too proud to marry a girl with money, because he is poor. And I say he is too brave to flirt, or even to encourage poor little me, if he does not intend to marry. But he might take just a little more notice, and be a little kind, especially when I look particularly nice, without exactly flirting. Perhaps—perhaps—" And the maiden peered through the fleecy tresses which veiled her face, and smiled at her semblance in the glass; for Hope told a flattering tale. "Perhaps he thinks me very pret-

ty indeed, and if he were to take much notice he might begin to grow foud of me. Perhaps already he finds that he cares for me a little, or more than a little. Perhaps he is afraid that he should find out he *loves* me some fine day."

With jealousy of any living rival Janet was not troubled. She felt quite sure that he had looked with favor on no other girl in Pedlington. "He is not a man of many fancies," she thought. "When *he* loves, it will be once and forever."

From childhood her whim had been to love some maiden knight—to win a lover who should love for the first time in loving her. For wealth or station she cared little. A man of innate nobility was her ideal. The more mature in years he might be, the greater her triumph would be, as resistance to love would have grown part of such a man's nature. To her apprehension Mr. Lane had embodied this visionary hero at their first meeting on the river. All subsequent acquaintance and report had confirmed the truth of her divination.

Now for a moment a cruel pang shot across the joy which filled her heart. She remembered the profound sadness of Mr. Lane's face, clouding all too soon the look of admiration which he could not control. Could the interpretation to this lie in that strange phrase which he made use of when refusing to dine here to-day, "An old engagement holds me?" No, no; he meant no more than he said. He was unable to come to dinner, because he had promised to go and teach those poor dirty creatures at the Ragged School.

"Could he *have loved* once and forever?" Her wish was father to the thought which answered this question. "No; he had never loved. That heart was too lofty. No woman had conquered it. But I, poor little *me*, whom he *does* admire, whom he *does* care for already, I will climb up into it, and dwell there, and be at rest."

At length Janet took Mr. Lane's large green gingham *umbra* out of her cupboard, laid it gently on the floor, and stepped over it into bed. This was her little allegory. She called it the threshold of his heart.

CHAPTER XIV.

POPERY.

ON the day after Mrs. Browne's party Mr. Lane left two cards at the house, one for the hostess and one for Miss Lyte, after which

for the remainder of the school half year he avoided that part of the town; and Martin vainly endeavored to divert his tutor's attention from the classics to social æsthetics. Mr. Browne's house, too, was situated in a pleasant quarter, or rather suburb, of the town, lying in wait with its three pretty green doors (one for the office, one for the house, and one for the kitchen), and their bright little brass knockers representing Cupids, to catch bucolical clients, or rustic hearts, or country vegetables and dairy produce, as the case might be. The front of the house, which gave immediately on to the foot-path, was closely curtained from profane eyes, like the ladies' apartments in a Turkish palace. Even in summer, when it might be conjectured that the windows were open, so that a glimpse of the interior would have been possible from without, this was jealously obstructed by projecting sun-shade blinds, reinforced with Venetian shutters, which in their turn were supported by diaphanous drapery of virgin white. At the back of this enchanted castle, commanded by the bay-windows of the little morning-room and of sundry bowers sacred to maiden occupancy, was a charming little garden, like a pre-Raphaelite picture, or the quadrangle of a Moorish house. It was long, narrow, exquisitely kept, with a lawn like green Genoa velvet, a path like majolica porcelain, flower beds like the pattern on a new Brussels carpet (only brighter), an acacia-tree like one in the foreground of a Watteau picture, a fernery in the corner, a pear-tree at the end, and all inclosed with a high red brick wall geometrically decorated with cherry, greengage, apricot, and peach trees. But neither Watteau, Millais, nor Mulready could have done justice to the group which formed the life of this charming picture when Mr. Browne and his quiver of arrows were dotted about the lawn on a still summer evening, or when the tea-table was laid under the acacia, and only a favored guest or two were admitted to the simple festivity.

Also at this approach to Pedlington a skillful nursery-man and florist exhibited his seductive wares. Thither Mr. Lane had been wont to resort for the purchase and exchange of roots, bulbs, and what not, for he was cunning in the cultivation of early tulips, hyacinths, and the rarer orchids; and though pursuing the art of floriculture himself only on the smallest scale, found many occasions for visiting Mr. Burgeon's green-houses and forcing sheds. It happened also



"THIS NOBLE FERN WAS PROCURED AT NO SLIGHT COST."

that Janet Browne had a whimsical fancy for the florist, whose acquaintance she cultivated with more skill than her flowers, which were perpetually suffering from blight, mildew, or other infirmity, and exhibited a general tendency to leave off blossoming as soon as she had arranged them nicely on her window-sill and begun to enjoy their luxuriance.

Even now, when cruel winter chilled with its icy breath the produce of field and garden, Janet would pervade the domain of Mr. Burgeon, half sad, half sanguine. She

would have a crimson camellia. She liked to wear a bud of that plant in her black crape bonnet. Janet detested your French make-believe flowers. We might just as well have painted wooden pears and peaches for dessert, and blown egg-shells for breakfast, she said, as sham flowers for ornament. But then *her* camellia chronically displayed that infirmity about blossoming, and had to be changed, and Mr. Burgeon was "a dear old thing," and so good-natured! So she went again and again, each time getting a plant full of bud and promise in exchange

for her denuded one. But only Nelly knew that the little green sprig which Janet wore in bosom or bonnet with her crimson flower was daintily cut from her own *Osmunda Regalia*, and that this noble fern was procured at no slight cost of wheedling and entreaty from the obdurate Burgeon, who had taken it from a gentleman in exchange for a valuable Brazilian orchis, the *Osmunda Regalia* being almost as rare in Kent as the Black Swan.

Yet no trace of the gentleman in question could she discern at Burgeon's, though many a time she would look wistfully back as she left that resort, or in vain hasten her steps as she went thither. She abstracted that mute card which he had left for Mrs. Browne from the *papier-maché* tray. It bore in a corner a legend (in manuscript), "The Abbey." Not that there was any occasion to tell Janet where he lived. But she liked the scrap of his handwriting, and somehow with it in her hand felt nearer to him in his solitude. And she too was alone. When you have set your heart upon one person; and given its treasure to him, you are alone without him, though all the world is around you. Alone without him even when he *can* not come: how much more so when he *will* not; when day succeeds to day, and each day of hope deferred is followed by a night of heart-sickness! Albert had given his three days' notice to Janet, and abandoned the early walk now. He would go with her no longer. Some suspicion was preying upon Albert's cloudy, mystical spirit. At first she pitied him, and tried to comfort him. But soon an instinct whispered to her that he suspected and dreaded the man whom she loved. So poor Albert became odious to her. Comfort him? He was tormenting her with his timorous, ominous face. She became so nervously affected by Albert's silent doubts that his presence grew almost insupportable to her. She shuddered if by chance he touched her. And yet poor Albert loved her honestly and tenderly, and would have borne some slight suffering willingly to do her service. But this mental torture was horrible, and did her no service. Albert would have gone to Mr. Lane and spoken his mind frankly if he had only dared. Once he tried to resolve. But it was beyond his strength. He dreaded Mr. Lane too much to confront him with a declared suspicion. Not that he thought the man would actually set upon him and do him a bodily harm. He could not define

his fears, but acknowledged to himself that he dared not do this thing.

One morning Janet desperately set out for her walk alone. A keen wind was blowing from the north, and before she had gone many yards she was struggling with the blast and a pelting storm of hail. Poor Janet had no umbrella with her, and probably could not have held one over her if she had. She kept on her way bravely, right down the High Street, where two or three clerks or shop-men, wrestling through the wind and sleet to their early labors, encountered her, and turned, wondering at her. She was too fragile, too elegant, and, in the passing glimpse they caught of her, too beautiful to be out alone at such an hour and in such weather. But on she went, heedless of their looks, their wonder, their pity. For the sympathy of one only she cared; and as she turned out of the broad street to follow the terrace which skirted the cliff, that man came in her footsteps down the High Street, but turned in the other direction down Corn Lane toward the school. So she battled on alone, with the storm and the solitude within her and without, and made her lonely circuit, and reached home wet, weary, and too late for breakfast. But Mr. Lane had discontinued his practice of taking the cliff road to the school, and, as we have seen, had gone to his daily work by the other route.

On the Saturday afternoon which followed the Tuesday of Mrs. Browne's party Mr. Lane walked up to the Rectory before dusk, and found the Reverend Cyprian putting the final touches to his sermon. The parsonage was a large costly house, the new rector a small and very thrifty man. He occupied the library only, which served him as a study, and his invalid sister who kept house for him as a reception-room. The divine's corner was parted from the larger area of the apartment by a folding screen. An air of mediæval religion pervaded his section. A large colored transparency covered the window, and was lit from without by a last level ray of the setting sun. In the centre, against a sky of Syrian blue, sat the Blessed Virgin, represented as a young and beautiful girl, under a lofty vine-twined canopy. She appeared rapt in contemplation; on either side of her stood a white lily and a distaff, and written underneath, "EGO FLOS CAMPI, ET LILIUM CONVALLIUM." Mr. Key worked at a table in a recess, lit by a wax taper in a brass candlestick. In another recess a col-

ored statuette of the Virgin Mother and Infant Saviour stood, and above this hung a veiled crucifix between two very tall candles.

The ecclesiastic was delighted at Mr. Lane's friendly intrusion. And though his manner was light and joyous, his keen eyes detected that shadow of suffering never long absent from Mr. Lane's face when in repose, and which certainly had darkened during the last few days.

"How jolly of you to come!" he said. "Do you know I have been afraid to come to you? I am ridiculously timid, and you are such a formidable man. And then I know I was impudent to you the other night. I called you a radical. But you have forgiven me, have you not?"

"If you talk about timidity and forgiveness I shall get nervous too," said Mr. Lane, "because I may offend you before long. And I should not come to you if I thought you censorious. But excuse me. I want to look at this book."

Whereupon Mr. Lane affected to read, in order to give his host time to finish the homily upon which he was engaged. Presently, hearing a movement behind the screen, he went forward, and found the lady of the house there, with whom he conversed quietly till her brother appeared.

"Now what shall we have?" said the Reverend Cyprian, who offered music to a friend as naturally as a farmer would offer his guest meat and drink—"something racy?" And he looked at Mr. Lane with a peculiar expression of interest; then, without waiting for an answer, addressed his sister. "Agnes, my dear," he said, "you two look sad." And sitting down at the piano, he played the music of *The Vale of Rest*.

"Again, Cyprian, and again," she said, when he left off. So he complied with her request. Then, wheeling round on the stool, he looked fixedly at Mr. Lane, who for some reason did not seem as self-possessed this evening as he usually did.

Mr. Key still looking at him with those insatiable inquiring gray eyes, Mr. Lane returned the look sadly, and, unable to repress a sigh, said, "'It hath a dying fall.'"

"Yes, that is just it," Key replied, nodding his head in agreement with what was said, but in some slight depreciation of the music. Then walking silently behind his screen to a harmonium, he struck out the grand old music of the *Dies Ira*, now and again bursting into song as the spirit of the hymn stirred the chords within him. Miss Key trembled

and shed tears. She was evidently too weak and sensitive to bear it without excessive emotion, or else she was one of those whose emotions lie so near the surface as to be ever running over. But Mr. Lane thought the former to be her case.

He rose and stirred the fire, seeing that the lady shivered, and asking her to rise, moved her chair nearer to it. Then, as he stood with an elbow on one end of the mantel-piece, Key joined them, and said to Mr. Lane, "How weary you look! You seem to have grown older since I saw you last."

"The holidays are not far off," Mr. Lane replied.

"Where do you intend to spend them?" Key asked.

"The first fortnight or three weeks in my den," said Mr. Lane. "After that I am going to Oxford. I suppose you know my time here has drawn to a close?"

"No, I did not," Key answered. "But if you think an English degree worth having in addition to your German ones, I am glad to hear that you are able to go up at once, and that you have chosen Oxford. I am a Cambridge man, but I must admit there is more vital religion and more vivid intellectual life at Oxford. I trust it will not always be so."

"You have done a good honest stroke of work here," the parson resumed, after a pause. "I find that a thoroughly healthy, vigorous tone prevails among the boys, and the school is well set upon its legs. Besides which, Phelps is a host in himself. You know he and I were school-fellows. I always had the most profound respect for him."

As Mr. Lane remained silent, Mr. Key seemed to let his fancy wander to the past. His sister had just risen and left the room. He now spoke again: "For him, and for a great friend and rival of his at Harrow, one Bedford Lyte."

Still Mr. Lane stood, with one foot on the bar of the fender and one elbow on the end of the mantel-shelf, gazing into the fire with apparent abstraction.

"All the boys venerated them," Key continued. "We called them 'Gemini.' They were our gods, present, visible, obvious. And, like Castor and Pollux at the Battle of the Lake, they fought the school's battle for us once together, coming unexpectedly on the scene when we were being worsted and some of us terribly mauled by a host of roughs. But the name 'Gemini' had a facetious *entendre* too, because they happened to be sin-

gularly unlike each other in externals. Phelps, as you know, is dark and thin, while poor Lyte had auburn hair and a very fair skin."

Again the parson stopped, and now looked curiously at the set, immovable lineaments and attitude of Mr. Lane, who still gazed steadfastly into the fire; but finding that the other paused, asked, "Why do you say 'poor Lyte'?"

"I will tell you presently," Key resumed. "But, do you know, I think that as a boy you must have singularly resembled Bedford Lyte. Another person would not think so, perhaps, because your beard is so enormously thick, and your whole expression so rigid. Pray excuse me. I don't mean to be rude. But I can feel, I know, that you have suffered much before your face and figure became what they are.

"He was a splendid fellow, a noble fellow, I do now believe, speaking in the sight of God, though he fell terribly, awfully. I fear the story told of him is substantially true. A young lady was abducted from his guardian's house, a sister of the Mr. George Baily who married the second Miss Browne—But why should I sicken you with a horrible story about a man whom you never heard of before?"

"Go on," said Mr. Lane, speaking gently, but with a tone of authority—"go on, Key. What have you heard?"

A strange question this! almost implying that this man was behind the scenes, and knew all, and desired to hear what account had been currently reported! The divine also noticed that his interlocutor called him "Key" in a familiar tone, as if they had been long acquainted. The large room, dimly lighted by the fitful flaring of the fire, seemed to reel. The form of this strange, stern man loomed larger than it actually was in the dubious light. A phantom dance of Phelps and Bedford Lyte and poor Eleanor Baily and Sir Thomas Balbry and this Mr. Lane, all involved in mystery and crime, careered through the parson's excited brain. He could have screamed aloud in the weird frenzy which took possession of his mind. But remembering his sacred calling, and that whatever might have happened, whatever revelation was to take place, he must now have a distinct part to play, a dignified position to maintain, he controlled himself with a strong effort, and went on with the story.

"The report is that after having the

home, the only home, of his boyhood in Mr. Baily's house, and having received much kindness from the old man, Lyte took this young lady (an only daughter) away from all the holy associations of her childhood, that he ruined her, and then deserted her. A more fearful story, Lane, I never repeated; but you have almost commanded me to go on."

"Pray go on," Mr. Lane urged, somewhat impatiently.

"A baronet, Sir Thomas Balbry, was mixed up in this affair, I do not know quite how, at first. But he perished. Some say that he tried to rescue the girl, and that Lyte murdered him. Others that Lyte killed him in a duel. I see little difference myself."

"Who say all this?" the man standing by the fire sternly asked, with difficulty repressing a movement of impatience, and forcing his words to come out calmly from between his fierce jaws. "Who say all this?" he repeated, for Key was too awestruck to talk glibly. At length the latter answered, slowly:

"Every one who dares breathe his name. But the facts are known, Lane. They are beyond dispute. The lady disappeared, and has never been seen since. The man is dead, and the baronetcy extinct. I think Mrs. George Baily, the poor girl's sister, is the only person in the secret, and so is likely to be the chief source of the report."

Now Mr. Lane turned his eyes directly on those of Mr. Key, and the divine was fascinated by his earnest, steadfast gaze.

"Do you remember," Mr. Lane asked, slowly, as if he were working out a problem in his own mind, and trying to recall half-forgotten circumstances—"do you remember the licking that Lyte gave that fellow at Harrow?"

Key was in a world of phantoms now. Past and present, fact and fancy, were confounding each other in his mind. Strange surmises started into being, and suddenly were gone, giving place to others.

"I do remember it," he replied, presently. "No one who saw it could forget it. I wish I could. I have never seen a fight since. There was something awful in the dogged persistence of Baily and in the cruel, ferocious severity of Lyte. The whole scene presents itself vividly to my imagination sometimes, when I have been hearing some dreadful story; and blood seems to dance before my eyes when I think of Balbry's death, and the fate of that poor girl."

A short pause ensued, after which Key

asked, "But how can you know any thing about it?"

Mr. Lane, still keeping his eyes fixed on Key, and standing perfectly immovable, said, "I am Bedford Lyte."

The parson sat transfixed, with the palm of one hand on each thigh, staring at the other, and repeating his words like an automaton, "I am Bedford Lyte, I am Bedford Lyte."

He was utterly surprised and confounded by these few words. This man before him, this Mr. Lane, a master of the endowed Grammar School in the parish over which he had recently been placed, a man respected by parents and beloved by boys, had commanded Key's hearty admiration as one of those men who work their own way in the world, and who often attain to eminence in after-life owing to the maturity of mind and character attained in their laborious progress. He had recognized Lane as a gentleman at once, and recently Frank Browne had told him that their friend was of a good family, and not without what are called "expectations" in the future. But these facts did not unsettle his former opinion of Mr. Lane's present position or circumstances. He had either directly or indirectly been given to understand that his new friend had been educated in Germany, and had advanced himself to some professional dignity in the place of his pupilage before Phelps had offered him the mastership at Pedlington.

The ecclesiastic had also, as a school-boy at Harrow, known Bedford Lyte, and during four or five years of that enthusiastic portion of his life had been accustomed to regard that person as a hero. At school Phelps and Lyte, Castor and Pollux at one time, were Ajax and Hector at another. Their rivalry had been a contest of consummate interest to the armies of which they were the champions. While Key was still at school Lyte had left with a brilliant reputation, and was reckoned in prospect a Double-first at Oxford. Shortly afterward he dropped mysteriously out of his little world, and his place knew him no more. Time wore on. Key graduated at Cambridge, and was ordained to the curacy of a parish in the weald of Kent. There he formed an acquaintance with a family who had lived in Pedlington, and were on visiting terms both with the Brownes and with the late Captain Lyte, R.N. From this source he had heard how his old school-fellow had been disinherited by the captain, and how two of Mr. Browne's daughters had become heiresses.

The rumor of Eleanor Bailly's disgrace and Balbry's violent death also came to Mr. Key's ears, and the name of Bedford Lyte was connected with these horrors.

Now on a sudden he was called upon to make one man of these two men so wholly dissimilar in antecedents and repute, yet so like, for as he gazed at his companion, the brow and eyes of the boy Lyte became more manifest in those of Mr. Lane. Mr. Key also fancied that something familiar in Lane's manner of speaking had struck him from the first.

"A strange acquaintance!" he thought to himself, without as yet speaking, and then took himself to task for want of sympathy. "Not acquaintance merely," he continued: "he was my friend once. Still he bears the image of my Maker, my Redeemer. This man has sinned and suffered. He has endured and labored. He has stumbled terribly, but not fallen. He is bruised and sore. My office shall succor him, and I will be his friend. Let the Levite pass on on the other side."

But the bell was now sounding for even-song, and the parson went his way, still leaving Mr. Lane by his friendly hearth. After an hour's absence he returned, and taking a Common Prayer book, opened it at the communion service, and read aloud from the rubric as follows: "If there be any who can not quiet his own conscience, but requireth further comfort or counsel, let him come to me and open his grief, that he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience and the avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness."

Closing the book, he looked earnestly at Mr. Lane, and said, "When does the school break up?"

"On the 17th."

"This is the 11th," pursued Key. "You might prepare yourself for the Sacrament of Penance before the 17th."

"Is it really a sacrament?" Mr. Lane asked.

"Assuredly."

Then Mr. Lane gently directed Key's attention to a certain passage in the Church Catechism which states that there are "two sacraments only, as generally necessary to salvation."

"I did not say," added this astute theologian, "that penance was *generally* necessary. But oftentimes, I think. And always helpful in the solitude of the inner life."

Mr. Lane said nothing; so the divine resumed:

"The inner life is to many of us a dreary solitude, my friend. You have been fighting on bravely single-handed. But the enemy is legion."

"True," replied Mr. Lane, accepting Key's proffered hand, and closing his nervous fingers upon it with an iron grip—"true; but I must take time to think about it."

"Take time," the priest answered; "and pray that your judgment may be guided in this and all things. But however you decide, let you and me see much of each other in the vacation."

Then Mr. Key, having early duties on the Sunday, retired to rest. And Mr. Lane, returning without an umbrella through a pelting storm, sat down cold and wet by the dying embers of his fire. There he pondered deeply, and consumed tobacco moodily, till the dull gray Sabbath morning, ushered in with biting blasts and driving rain, dawned upon a world of conflict and controversy and remorse.

CHAPTER XV.

LE VOLEUR CHEZ LUI.

CHRISTMAS came at last, though Janet had many times thought it would never come; for these few last weeks had dragged out a very lorn and pitiful existence, as far as she was concerned. At last, however, pride, that theological vice, that social virtue, which gives nerve to so many a downcast, faltering knight, came to the rescue of Janet. Miss Lyte was still her father's guest, and intended to remain till after Christmas, meanwhile keeping open an invitation for either Janet or Nelly to return with her to Pitsville at the end of her visit; for Miss Lyte was a pleasant and sociable—alas! I was about to say "old," of course I mean "middle-aged"—lady, and though belonging to what is called "The Religious World" in that gay and fascinating resort of sinners, still managed to have a few agreeable people about her pleasant Pitsville villa, and was not at all averse to the company of a pretty and well-mannered girl, even if the gentle reprobate had as yet not been brought to see and amend the error of her ways.

Janet thought she would avail herself of Miss Lyte's kind proposal. She would not decide. Poor fluttering, longing, gentle,

loving heart! If *he would* not come, she would go, were it merely to show him that she did not care. While she cared so much: *à tra cura*—I apologize—while black care sits on her pretty rounded shoulder, and whispers such hard, dissonant phrases into her coral ear that her very gall-bladder seems to have burst and suffused her heart (were such a catastrophe possible) with bitterness. But she *could* not promise. He might come. He might be too busy at the end of the school term. Possibly Albert had offended him. Oh, what vengeance would be sufficient to wreak upon Albert if it were so! Not, of course, to atone for Janet's misery, but merely to requite the injustice, the paltry disparagement of one so far above it and above its author! Yet Janet did not in her heart believe that Albert could have erected a barrier over which Mr. Lane would not step lightly, without giving it a serious thought. Nor could Miss Lyte by any possibility be an obstruction to him; for she openly professed the warmest interest in and admiration of him. She was never tired of asking Janet such nice questions about him, and encouraging Hubert to speak kindly about his friend and tutor.

But now the vacation had come; indeed, some days had elapsed since the school had broken up, and Mr. Lane had gone to London without even leaving a P.P.C. card at the door, though usually he was so polite, and so particular in not omitting any courtesy, any token of respect, to Mrs. Browne. So pride came to Janet's aid. She trimmed her feathers, like any one of Mr. Lane's canaries, and made herself gay in what little sunlight the season afforded.

With Christmas came Blanche, Mrs. George Baily, Jun., and Robert Browne, lieutenant and adjutant of the gallant —th, to the bosom of their family. Of Blanche suffice it to say that she was tall and fair, like Janet, but taller, with hair more auburn, a more oval face, and a longer upper lip. Moreover, she had a melancholy air, owing, as the Pedlington quidnuncs averred (though Frank Browne stoutly denied this), to her husband's habitual neglect. Like other established belles, also, Blanche appeared to feel her existence upon the surface of the earth to be a favor ill requited by an ugly planet. But in truth our story little concerns this beautiful though not pre-eminently happy young lady, and we are scarcely justified in taking her photograph on so short an acquaintance.

Robert, familiarly termed "The Robber" (for which endearing synonym the patient reader will presently see a reason), was a gay, burly soldier, with a broad round bronzed face, deep-set gray eyes of the twinkling order, a short light-colored curly mustache, and whiskers to match. He looked particularly handsome with his hat on, did Robert; and perhaps the less said about his hair the better. No male member of this elegant family could baffle baldness after his twenty-first year. Albert and Frank, each in his day, had hearkened to the seductive voice of the hair-dresser, and purchased bottles of miraculous and costly preparations in vain. They had both grown skeptical. As to Robert, he was by nature a Gallio. Let the locks adorn his manly brow, or retire to his ruddy poll. It was all one to him. From the period of legal maturity baldness had crept stealthily upon each of these young men, like punishment upon the evil-doer, with slow but inevitable footsteps. You could trace its gradual progress upon the heads of Robert, Frank, and Albert, according to seniority, while the meretricious character of Mr. Browne's locks had been obvious for more than a quarter of a century. Frank, with his usual happy turn for pleasantry, used to observe that the *capillary attraction* was all on the female side of the family: and happily the girls made up in this respect for the deficiency of their brothers; indeed, the three younger sisters were endowed with their luxuriant tresses in some of nature's most lavish moods.

On Christmas-day the whole of this estimable family adorns itself magnificently (as described in Chapter II.), and repairs to church at a quarter before eleven in the forenoon, as all respectable families in Christendom (no doubt) do. But seeing that all such families in this particular district of this particular borough occupy pews in the body of Mr. Marmaduke's church, and seeing that Mr. Browne's party is swelled by the influx of Miss Lyte, Blanche Bailly, and Robert Browne, a question arises—How are all to be accommodated with seats?

Now the younger gentlemen habitually attend the old parish church. It was *the church* long before Mr. Marmaduke, or even his heroes, Wesley and Whitefield, had been born or thought of. Their conservatism was offended by Mr. Key's revival of the ancient Catholic ritual, in which perhaps he was somewhat hasty and impetuous; but nevertheless they stood by the bold little man,

and sneered at the old fogies who left the church; and Janet was so charmed with the altar and the surpliced choir, and the music and the increased reverence and devoutness of the service, that latterly she had been their unfailing companion. To-day, with a strange perversity, she wanted to hear Mr. Marmaduke preach ("peach" she pronounced it). But the Robber closed his left eye, twinkled at her with the other, and said that he would back her to go in and win, though Mr. Forsyth, the golden-tongued curate, was considered so eligible by a crowd of fair devotees. Blanche and Nelly also preferred the district church; and it must be admitted that all the cavalry soldiers with their gallant leaders made a handsome show at the latter place of worship, and that the rolling of their drums and squeaking of their fifes was a pleasant sound after the evangelist's prolix and monotonous beating of "the pulpit, drum ecclesiastic."

All the ladies, however, could not be furnished with seats even in Mr. Browne's ample pew, so Robert vowed himself ready to escort his "ancient Joan," little thinking that severe relative to be within ear-shot.

"Thank you, Robert," said Joan, with asperity, entering the open doorway of the parlor as he spoke. At her inopportune entry Nelly exploded with laughter, in which Janet imprudently joined. Finally it was arranged that both Mrs. Browne and sister Joan should accompany the younger gentlemen.

"Ancient!" thought Joan to herself, bridling, as she marched along. And only two minutes ago she was thinking how young and fresh her reflection in the mirror looked. "Ancient, indeed! What idle, worthless creatures are military men! *Nothing* to do but to gad about among tittering girls, and say the *most silly* things. And they must needs laugh, as if they thought him witty. Absurd chits!"

Then turning to her mother, Joan asked, "Do you know why Janet refused to come to the old church to-day?"

"No, my dear," her mother answered.

"Because the school is broken up, and Mr. Lane is gone away to London," said she of the hawk eye.

Mrs. Browne remonstrated: "But you don't mean to say, my dear, that she goes to church to meet a gentleman, or, indeed, that Mr. Lane would do such a thing. I am sure I think them both incapable of it. I have the highest opinion of Mr. Lane."



"I WAS IN THE CHURCH-YARD ONE MORNING, SPEAKING TO GRAVES ABOUT DEAR ALFRED'S TOMB, AND I SAW THEM."

"And do you know," continued the betrayer, waxing more wrathful, "why the walk before breakfast has been discontinued?"

"I suppose it was a passing whim, and died out like so many others." And the good lady, having said this, gave vent to her little sigh.

"Albert used to take her round by the cliff every morning; and they used to meet just here, on this very spot. I was in the church-yard one morning, speaking to Graves about dear Alfred's tomb, and I saw them."

"You out before breakfast, Joan?" And Mrs. Browne looked at her eldest daughter with unfeigned surprise.

Joan colored crimson, and then grew pale as marble, biting her nether lip, and resolved to speak no more, having already said so much more than she had intended. Her little triumph in betraying Janet's secret was now subdued with shame, and soon dwindled into a mere speck of spleen; for Mrs. Browne walked on briskly but silently, and smiled with amusement or some pleasurable emo-

tion. The simple trustful mother was merely thinking to herself, "I wish none of my dear girls, rich or poor, a worse husband than Mr. Lane." She did not once think of him as a school drudge, or even as a man poor and strange, but as of one upright and steadfast, on whom man or woman might rely. And so she would have said to Joan, had it not been for a suspicion of jealousy on the part of her eldest daughter, which now for the first time seriously entered her mind. As for Janet, she had enough money to marry a poor man if she wished to do so; and if she had been dowerless, still Mr. Lane had expectations, and was well able to make a good income, or would be so when he had graduated at Oxford. And there was no hurry for Janet to marry: she was a mere child yet.

So Mrs. Browne mused, loving her children too tenderly to wish them married, and hoping that if ever they should leave her it would be with men after her own heart. For all simple and noble characters, or what seemed such to her, this lady entertained a profound respect, and very little for mere incidental rank or wealth; and as the reader has already seen, she regarded Mr. Lane for Hubert's sake. The more she thought of him as Janet's lover, the more sunny bright grew her countenance, as though the angels' song had reached her yester-eve watching over her girls by night; and as if she had indeed come with a heart full of joy and peace to worship the King of kings on this His natal morn.

She took Hubert's arm lovingly; for the stripling was tall, and his mother short. As they entered the sacred building she whispered to Hubert, "Show me Mr. Lane's seat." He passed in before her; and as they swept round the northeast angle, under the painted window, Hubert, putting his hand on the finial of the bench, turned to her and smiled. So the gentle mother sat in Janet's seat, and prayed fervently for the willful girl and her lover, whoever and wherever he might be.

But as the face of Mrs. Browne had kindled with that celestial light of love, so that of Joan had grown dark, as we say when that light fades entirely out of the human countenance.

"Sister—sold again!" Robert whispered to Frank, after staring devoutly into the crown of his hat for the space of ten seconds. "Sold again!" The brothers had overheard a part of the conversation be-

tween the two ladies, and noticed that their mother was pleased and Joan vexed. The Robber's conscience was quite easy during his devotions, which he performed rigidly, as described in a previous chapter, although in his thoughtless mood he had first aroused that demon anger with which Joan was now possessed. However, the reader must not anticipate any tragical poisonings or poniardings. In a respectable and united family these little domestic skirmishes seldom proceed to more active hostilities. There are very few such cases on record in the archives of the county prison which is situated in the borough of Pedlington.

As you would naturally have expected from this report of the spirit which each lady took into the house of prayer, Mrs. Browne felt happier when they left church, Joan more gloomy. The young men, conscious that they had been doing the right sort of thing in the right sort of way, chuckled with self-satisfaction as they walked home to lunch.

A glorious day was that Christmas-day, frosty and bright. In the afternoon the girls accompanied their brothers for a walk. My Lord Blackpoole's park was thrown open, and they penetrated (by special permission) to "The Happy Valley," an inner circle from which the *plebs* was excluded.

Finches chirped and robins sang in the leafless trees. A tiny half-frozen cascade tumbled over a ledge of rock into a half-frozen lake below. The sinking sun shed a golden glow along the summits of the wood.

"Blissful resort!" sighed the Robber, with a serio-comic and reflective air. "Reminds one of Andromache and Ænone and Aspasia, doesn't it, Frank?"

"Can't say I devote much time to the classics," replied Frank, who was fairly puzzled at Robert's outburst of sentiment.

"Andromache, you see, was Number One," continued the marander, bestowing a friendly twinkle upon Nelly and Janet, which explained to their keen wit that his classical names were merely facetious adaptations. "When a gay and sportive youth I used to meet that charmer in these classic shades. She too was young and tender. Her mother found us out, wrote an anonymous letter to the governor, and flogged Andromache, which I considered the unkindest cut of all."

The girls voted him to be so ridiculous that he pursued the same vein. "Ænone

was Number Two," he said. "She used to wander forlorn in these solitary glens. I happened also to be prowling about these diggings. Consequently we met. She was the daughter of a river-god, I was told: old Pincott, in point of fact, who preserves four miles of the Thames in Oxfordshire."

"Why, you mean Clementina!" said Janet. "You don't mean to say she used to come out here alone to meet you?"

"By the name of Clem was she known to mortals," continued Robert. "I called her Ænone, and these slopes the knolls of Ida. I tumbled into this pool of reedy Simois one evening when picking her forget-me-nots. I caught a cold. She 'caught it' from her governess, and forgot me, and went back to Father Thames."

"Why did you call her Ænone?" asked Nelly.

"Because she was always sighing for Paris, beautiful Paris!" replied the Robber, with another fraternal twinkle.

"How ridiculous you are!" exclaimed Janet. The young lady in question was a cousin of the Ormsbys, and had been on a visit to them before Robert went to India. Having at that time just returned from a boarding-school in Paris, she was in the habit of regretting her absence from that gay capital.

Frank was perhaps the only one of the party who fully appreciated Robert's pun at the moment; but Janet and Nelly referred to a classical dictionary before dinner-time, and perused Monsieur Lemprière's version of the story alluded to, which so affected Janet that she forgot all about the Robber and his witticism.

"But who was Number Three with the wonderful name?" asked Nelly, when Robert paused.

"Aspasia!" he exclaimed, smiting his breast. "Her name haunts me still. But that sun-stroke, you know, which I had at Kurrachee—"

"Fiddle-stick!" interrupted Nelly; "Champagne-stroke, you mean." And they all laughed except Robert. For the report of this affliction, though credited by Mrs. Browne, was considered as purely legendary and mythical by the rest of the family.

"That terrible knock-me-down," continued the Robber, quite unabashed, "has deprived me of all recollection of the circumstances which attended my third, last, and most fatal passion."

So saying Robert poked Frank playfully

in the side with his elbow, and deftly changed the subject.

"Why don't the men propose? Eh, Nelly? eh, Janet?" he asked. "If you decoy them to this happy valley, how can they be obdurate? The very place for softly spoken words, to the sound of falling waters, or the beating of your own hearts."

"Perhaps the men *do* propose, you see," said Janet, archly; "but you can't *tell*, you see. You don't know any thing about it. Does he, Nelly?"

"That's just what I say," pursued Robert. "If the winter wind is less unkind than man's ingratitude, as the poet has unkindly observed of a noble sex, what can equal a woman's heartless frivolity? Think of your brother, the poor, war-stained, weather-beaten soldier, struck down by the tropic sun—"

"Ahem!" coughed Albert; and again they all laughed.

"Or smoking his humble cutty by the midnight camp-fire—"

"More in your line," suggested Frank.

"Or shivering in the cold dark trench, or scaling the breach in a storm of bullets, and not a letter came from either of you heartless girls to cheer the soldier in his exile. And then, when Claude Melnotte returns, you laugh and chaff and mock his prematurely gray hairs."

"Bald pate, you mean," retorted Nelly.

"Yes, my Nelly," continued the Robber, baring his manly brow. "Venerable absence of oakum!" Here he passed his gloved hand over the barren surface. "And that which should accompany old age, honor, obedience, and confiding sisters, I dare not look for, but in their place, chaff!"

"Shakspeare! if I am not mistaken," Albert solemnly ejaculated. But the girls were not sufficiently versed in English literature to detect the Robber's garbled and fragmentary quotations. So they were unable to appreciate the covert apology in his last sentence; and Nelly flew at him like a little bantam.

"Then you shouldn't get into debt out in India!" she cried, "giving papa epileptic fits, and making him sell money out of the Funds, when he has spent more on you than on all of us put together. And who do you think is to go barefoot and hungry to pay for *your* cigars, and Champagne, and horses?"

At each of the three closing nouns substantive, Nelly's voice rose to a higher pitch,

till she quite squeaked out the terrible word "horses," at the same time threatening her brother with ferocious gestures. It was a cruel attack. Twice, indeed, the Robber had outrun the constable. Each time, when fate was about to overtake him with its sure though limping footstep, a penitent letter had emerged from Mr. Browne's foreign budget. Also a lawyer's summary, containing a schedule of the prodigal's debts, in which the items specified by Nelly had figured to a considerable extent.

The veteran held his ground, however, and went on as if he had suffered no assault: "In their place, chaff! And, as I before hinted, ingratitude, more cutting than the winter wind! Janet relents, I see. The Queen of Hearts protects the Knave."

Janet did understand this last *jeu d'esprit*, and not unnaturally appreciated it fully. The old bandit was so brave, so magnanimous, so cheery. He wouldn't even break a lance with pretty Nelly, but took her points in his bleeding bosom, and seeing Janet's look of sympathy, turned to her with a funny compliment. Even Mr. Lane could not equal this freebooter at a pinch. And Janet did like people to be ridiculous and to amuse her. It was so tiresome being always dull and cross. The Robber did try to amuse them all, even at his own expense; and it was too bad of Nelly to attack him so fiercely. All men sowed their wild oats—at least so Frank said. But Janet did not believe it, not as Frank meant it; and having consulted her mother on this subject, was confirmed in the impression that it is your rakes and *roués* who spread the report that all men have been, or are, as they are. She knew one who never had been rake or *roué*. Still it was quite a treat to have Robert at home. She had a natural domestic sort of affection for "the silly old thing." "But it is not what I call love," she said to herself. "I think I like him best because he is not here quite so much as the others, and because he thinks less about himself. But he is one of us; and we are all alike. It is all self, after all. I can not reverence such a man, though he is brave and cheery; and if I can't, I won't love."

The ill-used warrior failed to extract much information from Janet on the subject of "Fuller's friend," as he called Mr. Lane. He and Captain Fuller had met before, and now he only knew Mr. Lane as Hubert's tutor, and as one whom Fuller honored with his friendship. But this irri-

tated Janet, for she disliked the cavalry-man in spite of his gallantry to her. It was not, as Frank had erroneously conjectured, because Fuller had been a friend of Bedford Lyte's in boyhood, and still entertained a sneaking regard for that reprobate. On the contrary, she put this down to his credit as a token of manliness and fidelity; and indeed she was disposed to give the bearded sex generally a certificate of generosity superior to that of women. But in her own mind she held a secret tribunal with closed doors, more arbitrary than any star-chamber, more implacable than any Vehmgericht. In it she impaneled ghostly juries, employed shadowy counselors, tried, convicted, and pronounced judgment to her own complete satisfaction on the scantiest circumstantial evidence, on concurrences of hearsay and suspicion. *A leur insu* all her acquaintances underwent this fiery ordeal, and often fared iniquitously, being unable to provide for their own defense. Already in her council-chamber had this judicial sovereign pronounced sentence of banishment from her favor upon Captain Fuller and most of his companions in arms. One by one, long ago, each of her brothers had stood in that cruel dock, against whom the evidence had been more than sufficient. Only their gentleman-like behavior to their sisters had recommended them to mercy, and their sentence had been commuted to loss of respect, while they were retained in partial favor, as it were, on sufferance.

A certain craft or method in Robert's madness amused his sisters in their playful moods. Reports of his desperate frolics in India and elsewhere and too palpable evidences of his extravagance reached the quiet house in Pedlington, together with printed scraps of general orders and copies of dispatches attesting to his many and brilliant services. Foot-notes under the roll of his regiment in the army list proclaimed his feats of valor. Ribbons and medals adorned his manly breast. Since their return from India his regiment had been the envy of a camp, and Robert, the adjutant, had been complimented in person by H.R.H. the commander-in-chief; so that although Mr. Browne had twice been constrained to sell money out of the Funds to pay his debts, Robert was in some sense an honor to his house. Lately this had been recognized by their bachelor uncle, the Squire, who had settled upon the hero an annuity of £200 a year for life. Still he came home in a

threadbare shooting suit, with only a few shillings in his pocket, and his old tail-coat in a decrepit little valise. A very tame cat he appeared on these occasions, frequenting, as he said, the ancestral hearth and tapping the paternal swipes. He also preferred the society of his sisters to that of the men at the cavalry dépôt, went any where with the girls or staid at home with them, and furtively showed them his collection of photographs, portraits of strange ladies in marvellous costumes; also among his arcana were curious little square pieces of paste-board inscribed with certain hieroglyphics and the printed address of a person whom he called "Nunky-punky." As this name was not at all familiar to them, and this confidence was invariably accompanied with a knowing wink, Nelly explained to Janet that "Nunky," etc., was a dealer in second-hand watches and mosaics. They were precluded from consulting Frank or Albert on this doubtful topic, as the campaigner had previously bound them to secrecy. In short, without trespassing the bounds of strict propriety, he treated them with singular confidence and loyal consideration. In return, they laughed at his penitential airs, said that he only staid at home to save his mess bills and shirk his duty, and that as soon as he could draw any more money he would be off to his dissolute companions, gambling and riding and drinking Champagne instead of paying his debts. Nelly added her firm belief was that he had defrauded that mythical relative whose grotesque cards he carried in the pocket where his watch ought to be.

"With all your faults, however, you wicked old Robber," Nelly used to say—"with all your faults, we love you still."

And they were all glad to have him at home on Christmas-day, for his merry eyes could always find something to twinkle at, and they seldom twinkled alone. Janet, as we know, though Robert knew it not, was particularly in need of some one to cheer and enliven her solitude.

CHAPTER XVI.

A MASKED BATTERY.

ON that same day of peace and good-will, at eight o'clock in the evening, dinner being disposed of and dessert placed upon the table, Mr. Browne rose, according to an ancient

custom in his family, and proposed "Absent friends!"

The governor of the feast, to his wife, who observed him with those loving eyes of hers, looked pale and care-worn, but so stern and resolute a command did the brave old man exert over both features and feelings that all the others thought him gay and joyous.

Now Robert also rose, so that the two gentlemen were on their legs at the same time. Robert read little, but remembered all that he read, and much of what he heard, and was forever quoting some poet or classic prose writer. Now closing one eye, and looking round the table with the other, he amended the toast, "'Friends, lovers, and countrymen,'" he suggested—"especially those interesting persons in the middle."

Mr. Browne gayly took him up. "Absent friends, lovers, and countrymen," he said. Then all the gentlemen stood up and drank the toast in honest port—port which had ripened under the quiet old house for twenty years and more. The ladies also sipped their wine pleasantly.

Now, to the general surprise, Joan came forward. "Suppose," she said, "for a little novelty and a little novel interest, we were to give a name all round?"

"Hear, hear!—name all round!" echoed the Robber.

"Very good," responded Paterfamilias. "I have no doubt it will conduce to general good feeling and mutual understanding." And he smiled at Mrs. Browne, who sat opposite to him in her place at the head of the long table. She also perhaps looked rather nervous, but knew no cause for alarm; and seeing her husband apparently cheered, began herself to look brighter.

They sat at table, going round from left to right, thus: Mr. Browne, Joan, Albert, Nelly, Frank; Mrs. Browne, Blanche, Robert, Janet, Hubert, Miss Lyte. The elder lady had chosen Mr. Browne's left hand to avoid sitting with her back to the door, saying that the cool air from the hall would not hurt a gentleman's covered shoulders. But the chair on Mr. Browne's right had fallen to Joan, and the Robber ruthlessly whispered to Janet that "Sister was sold again."

"Now then," said Paterfamilias, in that happy vernacular so familiar to English ears—"now then, name, from left to right. I fear I can not give you the pleasure of a surprise. You will all have guessed rightly that I drank to the head of my family—to Uncle Robert, whose absence we all regret."

"Thank you, Sir," Robert the benefited cried out, with some relief, for he had purposed to name his benefactor himself, but considered that his father having done so released him from obligation, and left the field open to adventure.

Every body was looking at Joan, who evidently sat nerving herself for an effort. "Being *ancient*," she said, with a grim smile, "and having no fear of being misunderstood, I drank the health of a gentleman who very naturally admires our dear Janet, and makes no effort to conceal his admiration, and I am sure with a little encouragement would—"

General disturbance and signs of disapproval, in the midst of which Robert shouts, "Shame! shame!—name! name!"

"Oh!" continues Joan, "if I am to be put down in this way, I decline to say any more, except that I always prefer gentlemen who have *no mystery or secrecy* about them—"

"Name! name!" cry Robert and Hubert in a breath.

"Captain Fuller."

Janet blushed angrily, but Nelly, leaning forward and staring at Joan across Albert's white waistcoat, said, "Why, my dear Joan, we have all seen through your little dissimulation long ago, and set you down for a dark gentleman who happens to be as solemn and taciturn as a judge."

"Thank you, Nelly," replied Joan, with a desperate effort to look amused, but losing her color perceptibly, and tightening her lips.

"Order, ladies, if you please!" cried Albert, rising gallantly between the combatants; "I—ahem!—I, as you are all aware, am—a Cipher."

"Hear, hear!" from the other young men.

"I have, as I was about to say, many agreeable acquaintances, and many—ahem!—amiable relatives, but no friends, absent or present, except my father and mother—"

"No, no!" shouted the Robber, with comic indignation.

"Excuse me, Robert," persisted Albert, gently—"no *friends* except the authors of my being."

"Quite a *Dodo Solitarius*," remarked Frank; and again general good humor began to prevail.

"As to lovers," Albert continued, "I have mentioned to several attractive young ladies that if other matters or negotiations of a matrimonial tendency should not turn out according to their wishes and expectations, and if they will favor me with a few lines

to that effect, I should be proud to conduct them to the Hymeneal altar—"

"Old polygamist!" interrupted Frank.

"No, Frank," resumed the orator, "*you* certainly should not misunderstand me." And Albert looked impressively at his censor, as though he could say more an he would. But Frank was in no way perturbed. Then Albert resumed, with more care, "Out of four or five young ladies to whom I may have addressed that observation—"

"You said you *had*, just now," Frank calmly observed.

"Out of four or five young ladies," poor Albert persisted, "to whom I *have* addressed that observation, or words to that effect—Let me see—" And he stood for a few seconds, bland, elegant, white-waistcoated, counting his propositions with the fingers of his right hand in the palm of his left. Having thus refreshed his memory, he proceeded: "Out of those five, two are already—ahem!—*more than brides*."

"Hear, hear!" shouted the Robber; and Mrs. Browne and all the young ladies present laughed.

"And, as I should have said before," continued Albert, carefully, and resolved not to be laughed into further inaccuracy, "if matters relating to a prospective matrimonial alliance should not eventuate according to *her* wishes and expectations with either of the remaining three, and that wounded heart will intrust itself to my care, its owner will have no occasion to apply to me that expression (of, I believe, Greek derivation) which Frank made use of, in his light and graceful manner, doubtless misunderstanding the tenor of my words."

"But, my dear Albert," said his mother, smiling upon the panting orator, "what *have* all these revelations to do with the toast?"

"My dear mother," he replied, "you are all so impatient! Impetuosity, I may say, characterizes this age, this borough, even this happy and united family." (Again Mrs. Browne's watchful eye caught, or fancied that it caught, the shadow of some coming calamity on her husband's countenance. But Albert went on without apprehension.) "The ladies to whom I have ventured to allude, being either already *more than brides*" ("Hear, hear!"), "or about to become the brides of happier men, can scarcely be spoken or thought of as my '*lovers*.' I have already explained that I am without absent '*friends*.' Being, therefore, without absent friends or lovers, I drank—ahem—"

"Out with it, old Circumlocution!" cries Robert.

"I pledged my countrymen."

And Albert sat down in the glow of rhetorical success, wiping his denuded brow with one of those fine cambric "hankshifs" which poor little Janet had lavished her money and labor upon for him during those halcyon days when they had walked arm in arm of a morning, like brother and sister dwelling together in unity. There were a dozen of them, at £4 16s. per dozen; and in the corner of each she had embroidered a Cipher so beautifully that Ludlam, Hill, or Harborough might have sold the handkerchiefs for a sovereign apiece.

Nelly, being called upon in her turn, and having duly blushed, laughed, shrugged her pretty shoulders, and put the tip of her tongue out, observed to an orange on her plate that she drank to her lovers.

"Now this is becoming too general," said Frank, rising. "I think it was a shame of Albert, considering his years and wisdom, to begin it. Nelly may be excused for following suit on account of the universality of her taste. I believe that's the correct expression. I tell her she is like a comet, you know, which has a considerable following or tail, but can not describe a regular orbit, or seem to do so, whichever may be the case with the stars."

Here Frank paused, and the Robber remarked, parenthetically, for Nelly's comfort, that the Milky Way was supposed to consist entirely of comets. It was all one to Nelly. She had never heard of that luminous track before.

"This," resumed Frank, "has been a day of revelations. Robert has already, during our afternoon ramble, given us a most affecting narrative of three of his first loves; and now—"

"Order!" Robert exclaims; "order! Not three of."

"I stand corrected," said Frank. "He confesses to none since Number Three. 'Of his three first loves,' I should have said. And now Albert, our family Lothario, in graceful periods, and with a touching melancholy, like the dying perfume of a crushed flower, admits that in the course of a long and laborious career he has contrived to spare five delicious moments to love, and left three disconsolate hearts to bewail those *engrossing cares*—here Frank paused, but nobody saw the joke, so he went on, with disgust—"which have snatched him from their em-

braces. Without any more palaver, then, I drank to Miss Ormsby."

"Which?" asked Robert, lifting his glass. "Clara?"

"Hear, hear!" the gentlemen all replied.

"The White Camellia," said Nelly, demurely sipping her wine.

"As lady-like a girl as any in Pedlington," remarked Mr. Browne, graciously. For still the stout old Briton held his ground.

"Proud of your approval, Sir," said Frank, again in quite a Christmas humor. "Now for it, mamma!"

Mrs. Browne, like Nelly, showed a pretty little indisposition to confess, but at last said, in a low, clear voice, and with a pitiful face, "I fear it may not be right. But you know it was the first glass of wine I drank since God took him. And I pledged our dear boy who is no longer on earth."

Perhaps the good lady attributed so much of sadness and constraint as she saw in her husband's face to some recollection of this trial. As she spoke the memory of all went back to last Christmas-day, when Mrs. Browne had refused her annual glass of wine; and back from that to a sadder day in the autumn of that year, when the news arrived that death had laid his silent finger upon a son of their house while a stranger in a foreign land. But they soon rallied. Fifteen months will heal most domestic wounds. The bounteous Hours overlay old ruins with so many gracious growths of moss and herb and floweret. Or else the envious Hours, sullen at our old regrets, encumber their relics with new waste and loss and ruin, so that grief is swallowed up in grief, and the old regrets have lost their power to move us.

"I am sure Mr. Key would not think it wrong, mamma," urged Nelly. "He invokes the saints, you know; and I think he prays to the Virgin Mary."

"Fie, fie, my dear!" said Mrs. Browne, holding up an admonitory finger. She was surprised to see no displeasure on the pale distraught face opposite to her, removed as it was by the whole length of the table, yet never absent from her tender observation.

Here Frank drawled out, as he cracked a filbert, "It would be rather good to tell old Marmaduke that mamma was penitent, and wanted absolution." And the horror-struck face of that minister presented itself to the imagination of his hearers, thus reviving their merriment.

Blanche next in her turn naturally said

that she had pledged her absent husband, George Baily. And Robert, who happened at that moment to look toward his father, saw such an expression of pain on his countenance that he forgot all the funny things he was about to say. But attributing his father's emotion to the memory of the lost, and hoping to rouse him, he rallied, and resolved to drive dull care away.

Rising, and winking at Albert, he began: "I am no orator, as Brutus is. Nor" (turning to Frank) "have my manners Antinous's easy way. I may have loved in days of yore, and may not. Heroes are but men—"

"Oh, oh!" from Frank and Albert. Scornful laughter from the girls.

"As Frank justly observes, however, I have already alluded to those attachments which were early lodged against my account in the bank of love."

"Bravo!" cries Frank, generously forgiving the marauder for having passed by his *engrossing* pun.

"Since which period of juvenile misfortunes," continues Robert, "the insolence of Jacks-in-office, and 'the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes,' have nearly driven the weary veteran to 'his quietus make with a bare bodkin.'"

"Shakspeare; Hamlet's soliloquy!" Albert gravely explains, proud of his acquaintance with the Elizabethan poets.

Then the Robber, with a quaint grin at Albert, resumes:

"The Sun of Kurrachee, however" ("Oh! oh! Hear!"), "that fiery luminary which floored me in the land of Vishnu, scorched the soldier's brain, but left his affections untouched. And as a burned child dreads the fire, so a wounded heart shuns the wiles of alien sirens. Janet, my sympathetic gentle sister, is now enthroned where Sophonisba or one of the other two nameless ones wields the sceptre over Albert. No rival shall displace my peerless Janet." ("Em—em!" from that young lady.) "But of friends and brothers in arms, men formidable in the battle-field, unwearied in a campaign, but in peace quiet, gentlemanly men—"

"So I should say," Frank interposes.

"Quiet, gentlemanly men, of rather sedentary habits than otherwise—"

"Van John and écarté," Frank suggests.

"Of rather sedentary and literary habits—of such friends I have a goodly company, whose absence from this paternal mahogany I deplore. These I pledged in the ancestral port, and also that little remnant of my hum-

bler fellow-countrymen, the rank and file of the gallant—th who survive the foeman's spear and the fiery darts of Phœbus."

"Quite a Marc Antony," says Frank, approvingly, as the warrior, sitting down, turns to his neighbor, and says, "Now for your secret, my Queen of Hearts."

Janet makes a little movement as if about to speak; then, catching a look of triumph in Joan's eye, changes her mind suddenly, and says, "I won't tell."

Her nature and habit, though not confiding, were utterly truthful. In a difficulty evasion never occurred to her mind. And it was by reckoning on her straightforward habit that Joan had calculated on dragging her secret to light.

"Come, my dear!" said mamma, encouraging her.

"Let pussy's head peep out," said Mr. Browne, kindly, and looking at her with unusual interest. "Let pussy's head peep out. What color is it?"

Looking at her father, she was struck with the earnest, anxious gaze he was directing toward her. She really wished to speak out candidly; but Sister's hard cold eye, and clouds of chaff or expostulation darkening the prospect, drove her within herself. Again she said, "No; I won't tell."

"It's my turn now," blurted out Hubert. "And if a girl doesn't like to tell who she is thinking about, I don't see why she should be bullied. But I'll tell you all who I drank to: Mr. Lane, the jolliest fellow I ever knew, and best friend I ever had. And if you'll pass the decanter, Sir, I'll give him another bumper."

At this point Janet's hand slipped under the table, and catching Hubert's as he sat down, squeezed it with ecstasy.

"Take another yourself, I suppose you mean," replied papa. The good man was holding out vigorously, for his wife's and children's sake, and perhaps also in courtesy to his guest. "But the bottle goes round the other way, my boy."

"The Black Tulip," said Nelly, sipping her wine. We have before mentioned the quaint love of contrast which induced her to confer this title upon Mr. Lane.

"I should not call Mr. Lane exactly 'a jolly fellow,' Hubert," said his mother; "although your regard for him does you credit."

"But he is a jolly fellow," urged Hubert. "He taught me to row properly and to swim. I should never have won that medal but for him. And you should see the boys' faces up

at his class! Instead of looking cowed and stupid, as we used to do with Doctor Oldham, they all look as jolly as sand-boys."

"Ahem!" Albert argued—"may I inquire whether hilariousness (if there is such a word; and I beg Hubert to observe that I have no desire to carp, but that I ask for information, not being myself a scholar of profound erudition)—is hilariousness *particularly* conducive to scholarship?"

"I don't know," Hubert replied. "Pulling a long face over a sum won't make the answer come right. I know *that*."

"No," said Albert, smiling with an air of absolute conviction; "no: certainly *not*."

But as the question hovered about the domain of social ethics, Frank was moved to assert himself and maintain his autocracy. "I have a great regard for Lane myself," he said—"a very great regard. Indeed, I asked him to dine here to-day." (Janet furtively started.) "But his constitution seemed to require a severe course of chanting and psalm-singing, and he is gone up to what they call 'A Retreat,' at the house of a parson in London, a friend of Key's, quite a horse-doctor at that sort of treatment, I should say. And with all due respect to Hubert's mature judgment and penetration, I think Lane is, like most religious men, of rather a melancholy turn, and as proud as Lucifer."

The revelation of Mr. Lane's proceedings and the profundity of Frank's observations induced a pensive pause, after which the Robber said, "Not being posted in the biography of Lucifer, my son Berty, you may consider yourself shut up by the family Oracle. But you're right about not pulling a long face. A man who looks as if he were going to be hanged for sheep-stealing *will* in all probability terminate his career in that agreeable manner."

In consideration of their dislike to new Acts generally, Robert's legal brothers passed over this little inaccuracy in his argument. It was only a trifling anachronism: hanging had been the penalty for that felony up to the year of grace 1835. Then Mr. Browne, turning to the lady on his left, said, with forced gayety,

"Last, but not by any means least. What absent friend held the place of honor in Miss Lyte's regard?"

It now appeared that an unmarried lady of maturer years than Janet or Nelly might feel embarrassed at such a question. Miss Lyte visibly hesitated, and manifested dis-

tress. Then looking round the table with an appealing glance, but avoiding Mr. Browne's eye, she said, "It may be well in the end, though it is very painful to me to speak plainly now. And I beg you all to remember that 'charity covereth a multitude of sins.'" A silence fraught with wonder fell upon them all. Then the lady went on: "Unlike Albert, who has so many relatives and so few friends, you must remember that while I have many kind and excellent friends (among whom I hope *always* to reckon all of you), I have only one relative living; and I not unnaturally drank to my absent nephew, Bedford Lyte."

The pallor of Mr. Browne's countenance became absolutely livid. Mrs. Browne stared at him, and quaked with fear. Blanche flushed with anger. Nelly pouted, and turned her glass upside down in her plate. The young men preserved an ominous silence.

The hostess, after a few moments' unavailing terror, caught her guest's eye, rose, and the ladies quitted the room.

Albert bowed them out with stately ceremony, closed the door noiselessly, and returned daintily to his chair. But no sooner was he seated than Mr. Browne, with his most artificial smile, made them a silent bow and also left the room.

"By Jove!" said Robert, "I thought the poor old dad would have had another fit. How suddenly she unmasked her guns! Berty, my boy, cut up and see whether the governor's in the drawing-room, and bring us word what's going on."

Hubert withdrew.

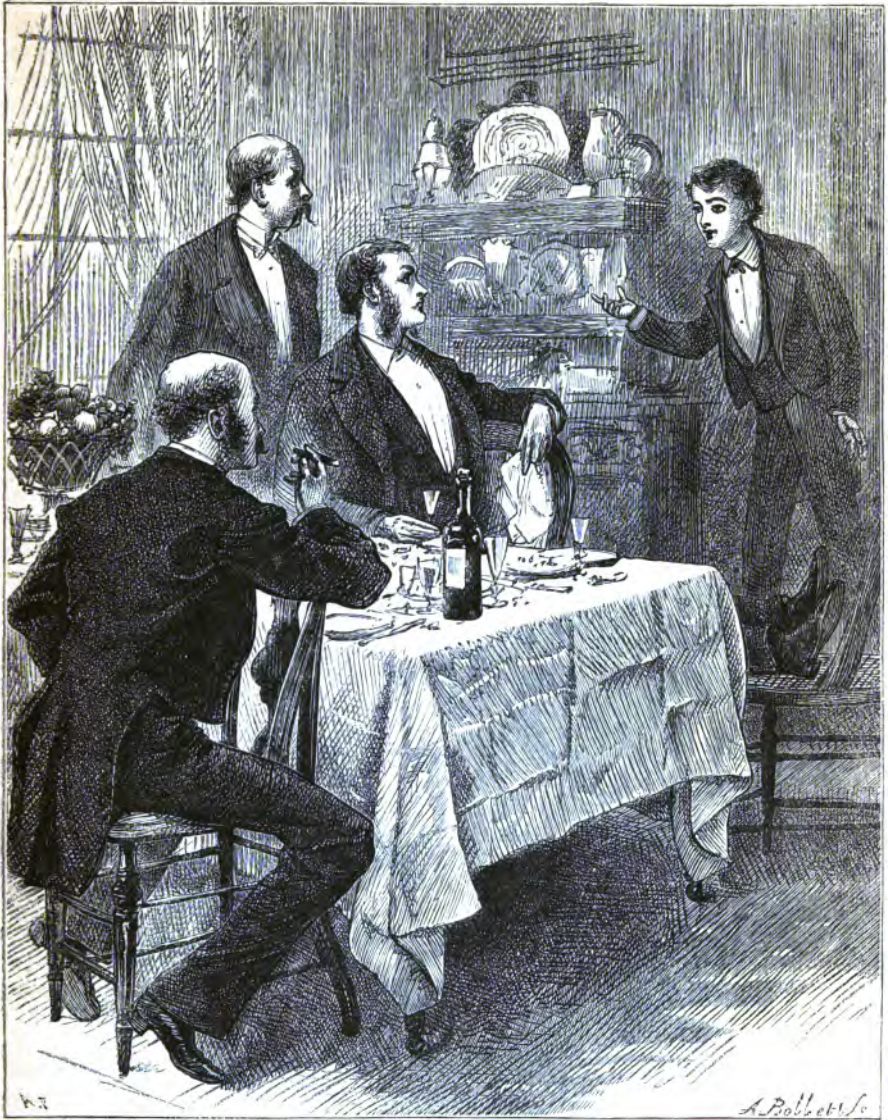
"What *can* be her game?" the Robber inquired of Frank.

"Game?" repeated Frank, savagely, and with a furious gesture. "Game? Why, to fetch this scamp back from the Antipodes, make a will in his favor, and set some speculating attorney on to contest Captain Lyte's. A pretty fellow to cram down all our throats on a Christmas-day! I wish Balbry had killed the confounded rascal!"

Now Albert felt some inexplicable desire to take this prodigal's part. "Perhaps," he timidly suggested—"perhaps Miss Lyte may be of opinion that her nephew has already suffered enough in loss of fortune and reputation for his share in a certain deplorable transaction."

"Serve him right," retorted Frank. "His *share*, indeed!"

"And you will allow me to observe,



"SHE SAYS THAT BEDFORD LYTE NEVER RAN AWAY WITH ELEANOR AT ALL."

Frank," Albert continued, waxing warm with his subject, "that possibly—mind, I decline to say more than possibly—the lady may have been partially to blame."

"Shame! shame!" shouted the Robber, more than half in fun, and hoping to provoke a quarrel between Albert and Frank.

"Excuse me, Robert," replied Albert, roused by opposition. "I am not aware that any member of this family ever saw Bedford Lyte, or had any reason to think ill of him until that catastrophe happened. He bore an excellent repute at Harrow. The con-

test between Bailly and him was a fair issue, fought openly before the whole school; and no doubt Bailly tried to thrash him, though he unfortunately failed. Dr. Phelps and Captain Fuller and Mr. Key were all his friends, and if I am not mistaken there is a Latin proverb implying that a man's friends afford some indication to his character. So far we can not fairly condemn Lyte. But we all did see the young lady. We know that her home was distasteful to her; and we may have noticed a certain ease in her manner with gentlemen."

Frank now broke in angrily. "This is what I call a mean, cowardly attack," he said; "trying to take away the character of a beautiful and innocent girl, as Miss Baily certainly *was*, when she has come to grief and has no one to defend her."

"I beg your pardon, Frank," rejoined the elder. "I only wish to hold the balance evenly between two persons. Wrong there was. Why should we put it all into one scale? Do we know any thing for certain?"

"No one ever denied that that fellow seduced and deserted her," said Frank.

"Nor do I positively deny it," said Albert. "Indeed, I admit that he has allowed judgment to go by default. And Baily has always implied that he was guilty. But I think, Frank, that as a partner in a legal firm of some standing, *you* might hesitate to condemn a man without positive evidence, and on the report of an enemy. And this I *will* say, while we are discussing a subject painful to us all: I should be very sorry for a sister of mine to be as easy in her manner with gentlemen as Miss Baily was."

"Hear! hear!" cried the marauder, thundering on the table with his knuckles, and making all the glasses jingle. "A most outrageous little flirt she was!"

Albert had already said more than he wished to say, though on mature reflection during the last few weeks he had concluded that Bedford Lyte had been served with scanty justice, and that there remained another version of the old sad story which it would be well for all persons concerned to hear. From first to last it had been taken for granted that the absent man was chargeable with Miss Baily's ruin. He had suffered severely in consequence, though the *a priori* evidence was against the general verdict. The Bailsys, father and son, had maintained an impenetrable reserve on the subject. Nor had Lady Balbry, the mother of the unfortunate baronet, spoken; though by proving Lyte's guilt she might have cleared her son's reputation; and the Bailsys might in the same way have justified the severity of Captain Lyte's will. But Albert remained silent, and surprised at his own generous advocacy of a detested name; and presently Hubert returned, with a flushed countenance.

"Here's a go!" observed that scion of a legal house. "Miss Lyte is telling them a fine cock-and-a-bull story up stairs; or else the story we have always believed is a pack

of lies. She says that *Bedford Lyte* never ran away with Eleanor at all; that Sir Thomas Balbry had more to do with her ruin than any one else. And the old lady took hold of my jacket, and *made* me stay to listen to her. And she has shown them all a letter from Lady Balbry which has made them believe every word she says."

"Did you see it?" Robert asked.

"Yes; but I hadn't a chance of reading it. Blanche and Janet were poring over it together, and Blanche is as pale as a ghost."

"Is the governor up stairs?" asked Frank.

"No," Hubert replied. "But the worst of it is, Janet vows she will give all her fortune to that Bedford Lyte as soon as she comes of age."

"I'm hanged if she does," says Frank, with considerable emphasis, and leaves the room, grinding his teeth.

CHAPTER XVII.

BITER BIT.

"Sit down," said Mr. Browne, when Frank came into his private office, quivering all over with rage. But the son's fury was at once calmed by the pale anguish of his father's face.

"I suppose," Mr. Browne said, "you have not yet heard that the offices of Baily, Blythe, and Baily are closed?"

Frank had not heard even a word in warning of such a catastrophe. But the blow was so sudden that he said nothing.

"Nor that your nice brother-in-law has squandered every penny of his wife's fortune, and left the country?"

Frank winced at this.

"And laid himself open to actions for conspiracy and fraud?"

"How so?" Frank asked.

But Mr. Browne went on with his grievous catechism. "Nor that the £500 which I had laid by for Hubert's outfit is gone?"

"Hang it!" Frank ejaculated, involuntarily. At this little outbreak a sickly smile played for a moment over the father's face, but immediately gave place to the settled expression of pain.

"Nor," he continued—"nor that Blanche had no more right to the fortune which she has lost than I have to the crown jewels?"

"What matters that?" asked the son, savagely.

"Nor," his father went on—"nor that Janet holds her fortune, or the title to it, entirely on the sufferance of Bedford Lyte?"

Again Frank ground his white teeth together, and scowled in silence.

"In short," Mr. Browne resumed, gasping, "General Lyte, the captain's father, executed *two wills*, one faulty, the other perfect. The Bailys suppressed the latter testament, which was a *fac-simile* of the former, without a flaw, and allowed, or, I fear, encouraged, Captain Lyte to set aside the former, and to bequeath the fortune in which he had only a life-interest to your sisters. The suppressed will, leaving the whole fund to Bedford Lyte at his uncle's death, was kept by the Bailys, and offered only the other day to that young man for a pecuniary consideration, to avert their ruin. Either in a fit of drunken spleen with the Bailys, or in some wild freak of generosity, the heir thrust that document, the title-deed of his fortune, into your brother-in-law's fire, and three adult witnesses saw it utterly destroyed."

"Hurrah!" cried Frank, feeling at the beginning of this revelation dismayed and discomfited, but suddenly by the last disclosure relieved of an insupportable weight of ignominy and distress.

"How do you know all this, Sir?" he asked, curious to ascertain the sources of his father's information, but knowing well that the astute old lawyer would not have accepted this marvelous tale on any thing short of absolute demonstration.

"How?" his father repeated, with severity. "Did I ever believe in Will-o'-the-wisps? Have I not always regretted that will of Captain Lyte's, and felt that it would have been better for my children to share and fare alike?"

"You have, Sir," replied Frank, anxious as far as his own emotion would permit not to aggravate his father's distress. "Yet you will admit that it is natural and proper for me to be able to refer to the evidence on which my belief in these strange events is to be founded."

"The papers will be found sorted and docketed in No. 7 of my private drawers, under the letter L," Mr. Browne replied. And Frank could not avoid a suspicion that his father spoke as if he were giving directions to be carried out in case of his unexpected death. "In the mean time you may as well read *this*. It is full of undesigned evidence of a valuable and singular character."

And the father handed a bulky letter to the son, and sat listlessly thrumming on the table with his fingers, and staring vacantly at Frank's face, over which a succession of changes came and went as he read. The letter ran as follows:

"HONORED SIR,—Being an old servant, Joseph Foot by name, of Mr. Baily senior, and formerly not unknown to you, when I served the late Captain Lyte at Boxwood Villa, near Pedlington, I make bold to appeal to you for a just compensation, which I hesitate to ask of Mrs. George. In the year 1850, after serving Mr. Baily for four years as upper footman, or groom of the chambers, I married a young person as was lady's-maid to Miss Eleanor. Mr. George since done me the kindness to make me office messenger. But Mrs. Foot, she left me—"

(Here the editor of these memoirs omits some unrepresentable matter, which, however, appeared to affect Frank's mind, as he perused it, with a sense of the horrible reality of that which his father had so abruptly disclosed. Then the following passages occurred.)

"Mr. Bedford Lyte, honored Sir, is said to have abducted Miss Eleanor. Many a half sovereign Mr. Bedford have given me, if I do not make too bold. He never took Miss E. away, Sir. Mr. George, he put the letter that Mr. Bedford wrote from Bagle in her way. He wrote for his money, honored Sir, that Mr. George used to draw for him from the India House. His own words was, 'Tell no one my address, and burn this when read. As my uncle has thought proper to drive me into solitude, I wish to be alone until I can cut out for myself a path through the hard rock, and make friends among those who, like myself, are traveling in desert places.' Mr. George threw the letter in the drawing-room fender, careless like. I was going to pick it up, when he tells me to mind my own business, and not pry into things which don't concern me. Which I had no mind for to do. But seeing that Mr. George was plotting like, I made bold to step up stairs between the courses and look at the letter. And when Miss Eleanor came up from dinner she saw Mr. Bedford's handwriting, and read the letter too. That is how she knew where Mr. Bedford was. She had not heard from him since he had the difference with the captain and went away. Mrs. Foot, as was lady's-maid

to Miss Eleanor, can tell, and has often told me, honored Sir, when I saw her (and begged of her to leave that handsome villa and return to her humble home) that Miss Eleanor had been wild to know where Mr. Bedford had gone. She was to have been his wife, as no doubt *you* know, Sir; but when Mr. Bedford found out that she was not Miss Baily at all, he was too proud to marry her, being a real gentleman as he was. *We* knew all about it, Sir. *We* often asked Mrs. Gamidge (housekeeper) who Miss E. was. But Mrs. G. only said that Miss E. was three years old when she arrived in Russell Square, six months after her master's marriage, and that she seemed strange even with Mrs. Baily, though she was so like mistress that we all knew who was her mamma. Who her papa was I had my suspicion, honored Sir; but it did not become me to talk. How any person with a knowledge of fisionomy can have thought Miss Eleanor Mr. George's sister is hard to tell. Next day, after reading that letter, when her papa (as she called him) and Mr. George was at the office, Miss E. drove off to the terminus with her trunk. Mrs. Foot was with her, and saw her take a through ticket to Basle, and came back without her, for Miss E. never came home again. And, honored Sir, you may hear the truth from the Dowager Lady Balbry, who lives at Myrtle Dell, near Cork.

"I make bold to put you in mind, honored Sir, that Mrs. Foot come back to me only a few days ago, with expensive habits, as certainly very handsome and elegant she is, but without the £250 which Mr. George promised to give her, and which it does not become me to ask of Mrs. George.

"And now I proceed. Last Thursday evening, only a few minutes after Mr. Lay and the junior clerks had left, Mr. Bedford he comes to our office—"

At these words Frank started, as if out of a horrid dream, and saw his father staring at him with those dull leaden eyes, and still thrumming listlessly on the table between them.

"That scoundrel in England!" exclaimed Frank.

"It seems so. Read on," said the old man.

"But who *was* Eleanor's father, then?" asked Frank.

"Captain Lyte."

"And her mother?"

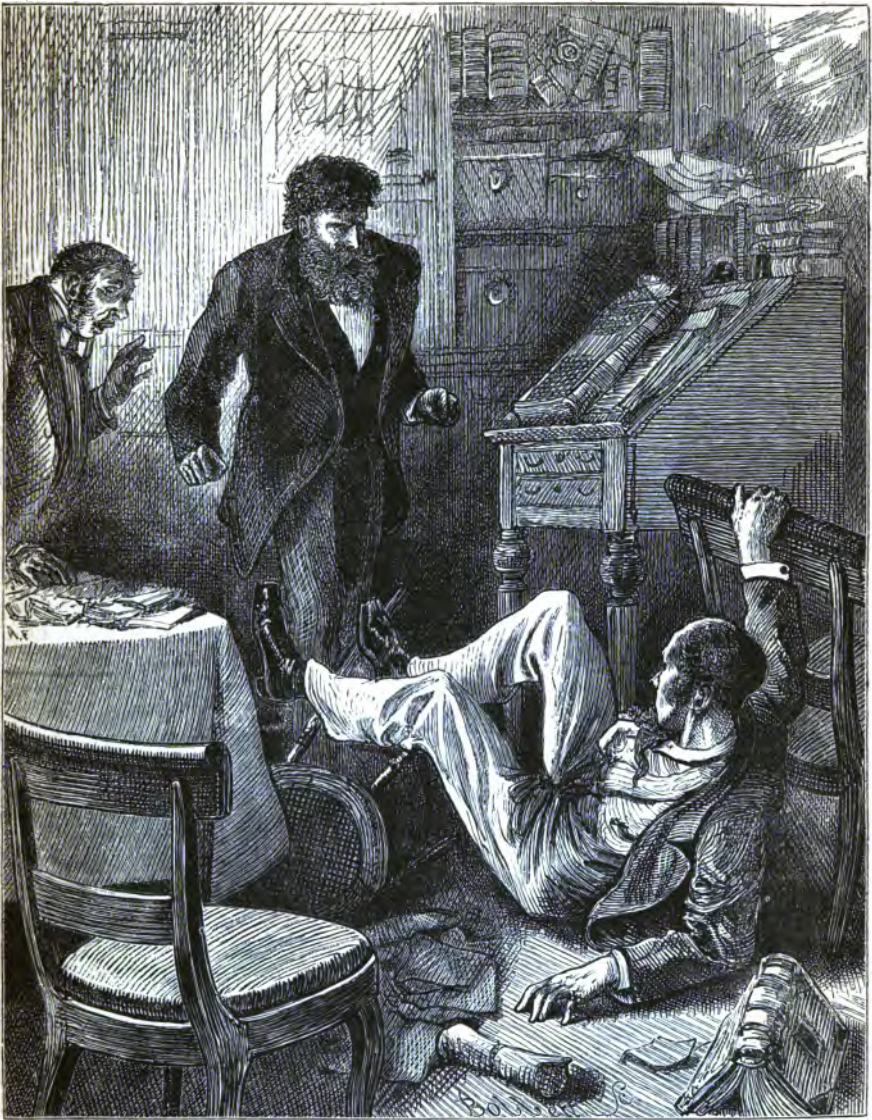
"The lady who afterward became Mrs. Baily. Read on."

Frank uttered one long reflective whistle, and then returned to the letter, which proceeded thus:

"I did not recognize Mr. Bedford just at first, for the gas was turned out in the clerks' office, and there was only one lighted candle on Mr. George's table. He had a great beard too, and seemed older and more care-worn. Belike he had come from Germany, as he did once before three years since, to renew a mortgage, as I understood, or to pay some interest on it. But this time, I know, he came to redeem the mortgage on Miss Lyte's life. He had the thousand pounds in his hand. Perhaps you don't know, honored Sir, that he had borrowed that thousand pounds when he came of age, and had bought an annuity with it for a certain lady whose name is not mentioned now. Mr. George said, and put it in the deed (so the law stationer told me), that Mr. Green lent the money. *Mr. Green!* There was no such person. It was a dummy that Mr. George and his father used to pretend to be a live person, to do things which they didn't hardly like to do of themselves.

"Well, when poor Mr. Bedford brought out his thousand pounds, which I dare say he had worked hard enough and stinted himself to save, Mr. George said he was very sorry, but *Mr. Green had foreclosed* a week before. Then Mr. Bedford he caught Mr. George by the neckerchief, and shook him this way and that till all Mr. George's arms and legs was flying about the office anyhow. I never seed such capers cut in my born days, honored Sir. A-gasping and a-choking and a-spluttering, Mr. George gurgled out, 'I-I-I could no-no-not help it. Phe-phe-phe-phepels let me sup-pup-pup-pose you were in German-erman-erman-ee.' And I did think Mr. George would never have got Germany out of his mouth without choking. Then Mr. Bedford left off for a moment, but directly Mr. George began again to say, 'Gre-gre-gre,' Mr. Bedford shook him again, and hurled him into the corner, where he tumbled over his own chair, and lay in a most ridiculous posture.

"Old Mr. Baily, honored Sir, hearing the noise—as well he might, for it was like two chimney-pots a-tumbling down stairs—opens the double doors between his room and Mr. George's, and seeing Mr. Bedford (looking awful, and shouting out 'Liar!' to Mr. George), slips backs as nimble as nimble, and locks both doors again, and pops his head out of window, and calls 'Police! po-



"MR. BEDFORD SHOOK HIM AGAIN, AND HURLED HIM INTO THE CORNER."

lice!' And in less than a minute up comes a policeman and a commissioner.

"Mr. George—I will say he is good in a difficulty—had picked himself and his chair up, and was sitting on it. 'Oh, policeman,' he says, 'and you, Edwards' (that is the commissioner), 'just be good enough to step into the outer office and sit down for a few minutes. I wish you presently to witness a signature for my client here, as the clerks are gone home.' The policeman looks suspiciously at Mr. Bedford, who stood terrible on the hearth-rug, while Mr. George's hair

and his collar and tie was all askew. But out they goes. And I staid inside the door to protect Mr. George, honored Sir, for I did think Mr. Bedford might kill him, as you know he killed some one else whose name is not mentioned now.

"Then Mr. George begins speaking very low. 'Give me your I O U for two thousand pounds, or give me that thousand down and your I O U for another thousand, and Janet Browne's fortune shall be yours as soon as you can prove a will.'

"How?' exclaims Mr. Bedford, staring at

him, and looking amazed, but not at all pleasant.

"Then Mr. George tells him that his grandfather, the general, executed a second will because the first was faulty; that the will which Captain Lyte had set aside (thinking it the only one) was waste paper, and that the captain's will was worse than waste paper, as the general's last will and testament, perfect, and signed and witnessed all in due form, was now in a drawer in old Mr. Bailly's escritory, and should be produced and proved at once if Mr. Bedford would just hand over that thousand and the I O U. The will, he said, was the same, word for word, as the one set aside, and left him (Mr. Bedford) sole heir to the whole property if his uncle should die without legal issue, as he had done.

"I was surprised, honored Sir, to hear that two young ladies so much thought of and admired as Mrs. George Bailly and Miss Janet Browne might lose their fortunes with a stroke of Mr. Bedford's pen. But Mr. George he quite thought Mr. Bedford would give in, and looks him hard in the face, as bold as brass.

"Mr. Bedford also looks hard at him, and seems to be puzzled for a while; and I didn't know which way he was going to decide. Presently he speaks very slow and deliberate, as if he was reading out of a book.

"In short,' he says, 'you kept a worthless document for my uncle to set aside, and so play into your hands, and a valid one for me to avail myself of, and so play into your hands, at the expense of his innocent legatees.'

"And how about my interest in my wife's fortune?' asks Mr. George.

"I can just see far enough into your mean rascality,' Mr. Bedford answers, 'to feel sure that you have spent all *that* before making me this iniquitous offer; or else that you have some private information which makes you think it impossible to keep the secret of the second will any longer. But you say that document is in the next room. Let me see it before I decide.'

"Then Mr. George gets up briskly and gives the usual three knocks at Mr. Bailly's door, and, after a few whispered words between them two, old Mr. Bailly, trembling from head to foot, comes in with the open deed in his hand, and, keeping pretty near his own door, hands it to Mr. George, who hands it over to Mr. Bedford. He glanced rapidly down every page of it, and groaned

aloud when he came to the general's signature at the end. Then he says, 'You two gentlemen have robbed (excuse me, I mean deprived) my grandfather in his grave of his bequest to me, and my uncle of his honor on the verge of the grave. I, too, have done you a wrong, which doubtless you have found it hard to forgive. Now, at last, let us make some atonement, and wrong no one else.'

"Then Mr. Bedford with his own hand and foot thrust the deed, the general's will, which was a fortune to him, into the fire, while old Mr. Bailly and Mr. George too seemed so surprised that they only stood and stared at him. The dull fire kindled up and burned the deed, and lit up Mr. Bedford's face a-stooping over it. And it was like the face of Michael the Archangel in the picture at the National Gallery.

"Then he was going, without another word or a look at Mr. George or the old gentleman. But catching my eye, and remembering all of a sudden who I was, he put his hand on me kindly and said, 'What, Foot! you here!' because, you know, Sir, I was in the house, not in the office, when Miss Eleanor was at home. So he puts his hand on my arm—an awful hand to get hit by, but quite kind—and he looks hard at me and says, 'What, Foot! are you honest yet?' 'I hope so, Sir,' I replies, not quite comfortable in my mind on account of Mrs. Foot and Mr. George. Then he gives me a pound. Nothing won't tie up his purse as long as there's a pound in it. And off he walks, jerking open the door suddenly, and, I suspect, finding the policeman pretty close to it; for I heard him laugh and say, 'Quite a cammer-obscura, isn't it, policeman?' meaning as they was in the dark outer office peeping through the key-hole at us that had the fire-light, such as it was, and the candle in Mr. George's room.

"That is all, honored Sir. I shall not open my mouth about the will that Mr. Bedford burned; and I hope you will make me the compensation Mr. George promised for the wrong he done me.

"Your humble servant,

"JOSEPH FOOT."

"A strange story! Is it true?" said Frank. Mr. Browne only nodded.

"We must shut this fellow's mouth," Frank urged.

Again Mr. Browne nodded, with a sickly smile.

"It would never do to let Blanche hear

this blackguard's story, after being robbed of her fortune and deserted."

Still his father continued to smile in a horrible manner.

"There's one drop of consolation in it all," insisted Frank: "between them all, they have managed to make a beggar of that mad devil, Bedford Lyte."

Mr. Browne, still smiling, only gasped, with livid lips.

Meanwhile the ladies were sitting silent and depressed in the drawing-room. The day of "peace on earth and good-will toward men" had ended in dissension, dispute, and angry feeling, hardly allayed and ill suppressed, when slowly but simultaneously a sense of something horrible crept over them all.

Staggering, confused footsteps came up the stairs, paused at the top, then passed the drawing-room door, with one dull thump against the panel.

Repressing a sudden faintness, Mrs. Browne hurried out. The girls flocked after her.

The Robber at the head, Frank and Albert at the feet, bore a rigid form along the passage. It was the body of a man, stretched upon a shutter. They opened a door at the end of the passage, entered the chamber and laid it on the bed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ORIANA.

It was the second morning after Christmas-day, the weather still clear and keen, the air bracing, slumbering Nature smiling in her frosty robe of sparkling silver, like an expectant bride, confident of the coming spring. The Parliamentary train, which faced the rising sun as it sped out of London through the hills and dales of many-featured Kent, bore Mr. Lane, among other toilers, in a third-class carriage, or "rolling pen," as Frank Browne denominated that style of conveyance. The school-master was not above the society of his fellow-workmen, and though free enough with his shillings, and his sovereigns too, for that matter, as Joseph Foot had implied, grudged the additional fare for the mere temporary use of a padded seat in a first-class carriage. When Frank caused his valuable person to be transported from one section of the country to another, you would

have taken him for a Russian magnate or the heir to an English dukedom, so provident and tasteful were his traveling appointments, and so ambrosial his person. He carried vaguely about him the air of having left his mail phaeton with a groom and valet to follow by the ordinary train, he himself always traveling "express." You could almost fancy the hypothetical groom and valet—that is to say, Valet and Groom—traveling first class, ordinary, and tipping the guard a splendid shilling to connive at their Havana cigars. Yet all such creations would have been airy and unsubstantial; and Frank was invariably voyaging at the expense of a client. But Mr. Lane traveled third class by the Parliamentary train, reading a dog-eared Tauchnitz novel, and smoking a cracked china pipe, and drinking a glass of stale beer with an artillery-man at the Rochester station.

He was hurrying back to Pedlington, having at his "Retreat" in London, which was only an attic in the parsonage of a city rector, received an important letter from Frank, and considering that it required immediate attention. It had also been agreed upon between Mr. Lane and his spiritual adviser that he should visit Miss Lyte once more before that lady left Mr. Browne's house, and that incidentally he should behave in such a way to a certain young lady as to convince her that he could not by any but the most remote possibility become a suitor for her hand.

When speaking of the gentleman's spiritual adviser we allude to the new rector of Pedlington, not to the London divine with whom Mr. Lane had been sojourning. Yet we may be tolerably sure that whatever counsel he had received in the former place would not have been weakened or impaired during his brief absence. Having given in his adhesion to the advice concerning his behavior to Janet Browne, he had hit upon a grim and savage way of executing it—one suited to his humor. Nor was he sorry of the excuse for acting upon it rapidly, lest perchance his resolution might fail, though his friends wisely considered that a little absence and delay would soften the incidence of the blow, and cause the dealing of it to be less difficult. Their wisdom was *caviare* to Mr. Lane. He fumed and raved at all procrastination.

The absence of his ancient and constant companion in rain and sunshine had been sincerely deplored by Mr. Lane, and (previous

to that strange Sunday evening's interview with Janet, when in her girlish petulance she had provoked him to ask for it) had seriously puzzled him. Once since then he had asked Hubert whether it happened to be lying about any where at his father's house, but had begged him not to mention it to others, as the matter was wholly unimportant. Janet had surprised her brother hunting for it in the rack and in the wash-house, where wet umbrellas, left to dry, were sometimes forgotten. Knowing well what was the object of his search, she yet asked him, with a clear innocent face, and he told her it was the great gamp, the loss of which had caused his friend to suffer from rheumatism in the shoulder and neuralgia in the face and neck. Janet ran up to her room and cried, but not before Hubert had seen the generous blush with which she turned away. "And didn't she blush when I told her you had caught the rheumatism from getting wet? that's all!" explained the pupil, adding, "I suppose she was thinking of that day when we first met on the river, and all the chaff there was about it;" for he had no suspicion where the instrument in question was concealed. But Janet clung tenaciously to her purpose and the gamp, and Mr. Lane said no more about it. After that time he knew that she was keeping his former retainer in mysterious durance, and felt that such a proceeding on the part of a young lady was, to say the least of it, unique and noticeable. Moreover, this secret, lying perdu, so to speak, between these two persons of opposite sexes, had caused a dangerous and mysterious sympathy, or *rapprochement*, to grow up between them. And upon the whole I should recommend any young lady of my family or acquaintance *not* to conceal a gentleman's umbrella surreptitiously, lest the owner should prove to be a man less chivalrous and gentle than Mr. Lane. Some inexperienced young gentlemen have been known to become quite confident and foolishly elated at a similar trespass of conventional limits by fair experimentalists.

The train deposited our wayfarer on the Pedlington platform at half past eight in the morning, and he walked forthwith to the Rectory, reading Frank's letter for the twentieth time as he walked. He certainly did read that letter more often than necessity or prudence could have required; and had Mr. Lane been a coxcomb, the sweet that was in it might have drowned the bitter.

But, as it was, the cup contained a bitter draught, though still there was sweetness in it, and he drank it and drained it dry. Let us read it over his shoulder as he walks and reads.

"MY DEAR LANE" (it ran),—"It is very fortunate you did *not* dine with us to-day (Christmas-day, though it is now verging on 'to-morrow'), as I wanted you to do. For all of us except my father the day began well enough, but has ended most miserably for all. The morning post had brought my father the astounding news that Bailly, Blythe, and Bailly (Blanche's husband and father-in-law, you know) had failed. How or why we as yet have no notion. He kept the secret to himself till after dinner, and then only confided it, along with more disclosures of the strangest character, to me as his partner. But the strain had been too much for the old boy. Fortunately he had told me all first; then another attack of epilepsy came on, and nearly took him off. The worst (or nearly the worst) of it is that all Blanche's fortune is gone. Owing to some most improper arrangement between Mr. Bailly and the late Captain Lyte, only a mere song was settled upon poor Blanche, and that is all she has left. And the governor has lost the £500 which he had allowed them to invest for Hubert's benefit. I assure you I feel five years older already. Bailly seems to have acted with incredible faithlessness, and what, I fear, we must consider deliberate villainy. It is a double blow to me; for you know I rather stand upon my estimate of character; and I always supported Bailly (who, like Sappho, has had his detractors), and came down heavily upon that infernal rascal Bedford Lyte, who, I must admit, has lately made some atonement for his villainy.

"Miss Lyte also, you will be surprised to hear, thought proper to behave in the most unkind and unfriendly manner, fulfilling in our case the proverbial concurrence of misfortunes. She drank her precious nephew's health, and took his part to our faces: a fellow who, I think I told you, ran away with Blanche's sister-in-law, and left her to go to the dogs in some foreign country. He also casually murdered a baronet, a client of Mr. Bailly's, who tried to rescue the poor girl. It happens that this nice young man, being a spendthrift, like most criminals, had mortgaged his reversionary interest in the old lady's life to Bailly or some ally of his, and

that the mortgage having expired, Bailly foreclosed before the smash, which looks to me like 'biter bit.' The odd coincidence is that the fellow had the money all the time to redeem it, but neglected to do so till it was too late, trusting to the generosity of a man whom he had so injured and disgraced, and upon whom he committed a felonious assault when he found out his mistake.

"But now, my dear fellow, I want further to confide in you as a friend. You must see that we all have held you in more esteem than we do mere casual acquaintances, and that we have a sincere regard for you, which I flatter myself you reciprocate. I have this evening had a most extraordinary scene with Janet, who is going off to Pitsville with Miss Lyte in a day or two, and vows she will give up her fortune to this seducer and assassin when she comes of age. She chooses to believe a cock-and-a-bull story which Miss Lyte has most improperly told her, to the effect that Bedford Lyte (this nephew) was unjustly disinherited by his uncle. As if Captain Lyte could not do as he chose with his own money! And it does seem that the young man has voluntarily resigned some real or fictitious claim to this inheritance which Bailly at the last moment offered to place at his disposal for a large sum of money. But no practical man or woman could attach any value to such a doubtful incident.

"At first I was savage with Janet; and you will admit that the disclosures of the day have been calculated to ruffle a serene temper. But anger is thrown away upon her, and I resorted to reason. I asked her what she would do if she wanted to marry a man with no money, but with prospects and abilities, and whom her fortune might help on in life—in short, whom it might assist to achieve the very highest position. She said, and I believe she means it, that she would never marry any but one man in the whole world, now or at any future time, and that this particular (and peculiar) man would rather take her without money than with. You *must* guess, you *must know*, Lane, who that man is. No fellow with his eyes open could have been in your place and not suspected it. And I can confirm the suspicion, for I unfortunately put that very nonsense into her head myself. The truth is that I thought she was setting her heart upon a certain person, and told her that he would not marry a girl with money, because you had said as much, and I wanted to save

her from laying up misery and disappointment for herself. But Janet is very deep and willful. She has held to her preference in spite of me. There is only one way of curing her of this folly about giving up her fortune, and only one man who can do it. It rests entirely with you. Come as soon as you can. When a thing must be done, it can not be done too soon.

"Ever yours,

F. B."

"Any thing wrong?" asked Key, after the first warmth of his greeting was over, and he had time to notice how depressed Mr. Lane looked. Then the latter told him of the calamities which had fallen upon his parishioners the Brownes.

"Sorry Christmas fare," said the divine, who had already heard by letter of the loss of Mr. Lane's reversionary interest, and also of the destruction of General Lyte's second and last will, which circumstance he trusted might be used to bring about a reconciliation between the Brownes and Miss Lyte's nephew. At the same time, he was in possession of information which had induced him to counsel Mr. Lane's temporary absence from Pedlington, and to persist in his present purpose of behaving to Janet Browne in a way wholly dissimilar to that suggested by her affectionate brother. Indeed, while Frank was urging Mr. Lane to claim that fair damsel as his bride, and to persuade her to retain her fortune, Mr. Key was relying upon that gentleman's promise to shake Janet's preference for him, which the ecclesiastic had not been slow to perceive. Moreover, he seemed to differ from her brother as to the most desirable destination for that portion of "the root of all evil" which had fallen to the young lady's lot.

"I wish we could get Janet into a convent," the priest observed, with much relish of his own idea. "It is impossible to foresee the good that might be done with that £12,000. My college at Cambridge, the *Domus antiqua et religiosa*, as it was and ought still to be, was founded by a pious lady who lost her husband in a silly tournament on her wedding-day, and devoted her vast wealth to a better cause than matrimonial selfishness."

On hearing this remark it must be admitted that Mr. Lane, malgré his piety, experienced a slight access of that "cold chill" which Frank had complained of in Key's society. After refusing the meagre seductions of the divine's breakfast-table, the lay-

man sallied forth on his melancholy errand, alone and disconsolate, promising to return and report progress of its fulfillment.

Little more than a week had elapsed since he had quitted the scene of his labors, but he felt as if years had transpired since last he trod these familiar pavements. The town itself looked old and quaint. The changes within him reflected themselves on the face of outward objects. For more than two years his life had flown evenly among these scenes. The current had been deep and swift, but unbroken. Now it seemed to have been suddenly checked, and, like a river turned aside, to be hurling itself against unknown obstacles.

The phantom of this young girl, whose fair dream he was going to dispel, had taken possession of the citadel within him—had, without his knowledge, and assuredly without his consent, seated itself on the throne of his affections, and assumed the regal sceptre. It had commenced its silent reign before he was aware of its intrusion. In one moment, as she stood before him in the tea-room on the evening of Mrs. Browne's party, he recognized the double of the tyrant which held sway within him. In that moment the exotic sentiment sprang up miraculously, assumed the stature and dignity of the master-passion, and cast the whole man, with all his noble attributes, into shadow. Gazing at a flower! He was dozing under the upas-tree, inhaling a delicious poison at every breath.

But it is one thing to be overthrown (if we may suddenly discard one metaphor and adopt another) and another thing to crawl out of the lists defeated. On behalf of the lady as well as himself Mr. Lane rose and renewed the strife. Who shall say whether the reasoning or the sensuous part of his nature predominates until he becomes involved in such a struggle as this? Who can predict which shall prevail? We may put out of the lists at once the victims of many little passions. They are incapable of understanding even the power of the master-passion. To them it can not by any possibility occur. This fiery trial is reserved for the single-hearted, as if the strong man only were worthy of such a test. Of the other sex in such a case how shall a man write? Silently those sweet souls suffer, and often in their dole become so pure and holy that we can only wonder at them, and pay a higher tribute of admiration to the flower of womanhood

than that which we lavished on the budding girl.

Mr. Lane honestly accepted the conditions of the strife. Imagination was not to be trusted. Reason was still at his disposal. He goaded it into activity, plotting sternly with himself as to the most effectual means of rendering himself distasteful to the girl he loved. He took certain words of Frank's letter literally: "There is only one way of curing her of this folly. It rests entirely with you." But by "this folly" Frank meant the giving up her fortune. Mr. Lane, who knew another way of preventing *that*, meant the taking to her heart a baneful love. And the cure to which Frank alluded was a very different process to that which Mr. Lane in his integrity contemplated.

Albert met him in the hall with a melancholy voice and visage. "Good-morning, Mr. Lane," he said. "How do you do? It is an age since we saw you last. Do you mind walking in here?" And so saying, opened the dining-room door, which was at the foot of the stairs.

But the visitor turned upon him rudely, and walked to the umbrella stand, saying, in a loud voice, "Is my gamp here—a large green one, with a yellow stick?"

"Oh, hush!" whispered poor Albert, tremulously, for he had left the dining-room door open, and Janet was within. "Haven't you—ahem! that is, has it not been returned to you? I remember it perfectly well."

"No, it has not," replied Mr. Lane, emphatically. "Do you think you could find it for me, to take away presently?"

"Oh, certainly," Albert acquiesced, performing imaginary manual ablutions, and in great mental trepidation—"certainly; I will make a point of finding it. It shall be placed in the stand."

"Thank you," said the visitor. But the tone of voice in which it was said and the fixed look which accompanied it approached nearer to a threat than an expression of gratitude. Then he entered the dining-room, and found Nelly and Janet, one seated on each side of the fire. Shaking hands with them in a cold and abstracted manner, he asked after Mr. Browne, and then after Mrs. George Baily, saying that he had heard from Frank, who had given him some slight sketch of the calamities which had befallen them.

"But papa is already a little better," said Janet; "and if he continues to improve,

mamma is to take him to Dover next week : he rallied there so wonderfully after his last attack."

"But who else do you think is going away?" asked Nelly.

"Who?" Mr. Lane inquired.

"Janet," cried Nelly, evidently thinking the announcement would stagger the gentleman; "Janet! She will persist in going away with Miss Lyte, when we are all so unhappy and want her so much at home. Is it not unkind of her?"

Janet was somewhat taken aback by this, and suddenly hoped Mr. Lane would expostulate with her on such an intention; for she had only thought of going to put an end to the dissension which had arisen about her inheritance, and perhaps to exhibit or manifest her indifference at Mr. Lane's protracted absence. But her heart melted at his presence, and she would gladly have capitulated at his first offer of a parley.

But what had come to Mr. Lane? He had not been inside their doors nor exchanged a word with any of them for three weeks; and yet now he seemed to ignore Janet's very existence. She was going away, so Nelly said, and he only made answer, "I shall be here for another fortnight. Perhaps I may come in sometimes *when they are gone*. I am such an old friend, you know." And turning to Nelly, with a sad smile, he went on: "I feel as if I were more welcome in a house of mourning than a house of joy."

He stood on the hearth-rug with his back to the fire, between the two sisters, and stared vacantly at the portrait of some ancestral Browne above the sideboard at the opposite end of the room. Janet had not caught a word of what was said outside, owing to the size of the hall and the length of the dining-room; she was consequently quite unprepared for Mr. Lane's altered manner, which was particularly galling and humiliating to her proud spirit.

"I don't," she blurted out, in rejoinder to his last words; "I don't. I am no use in a house of mourning, because I never think about any one but myself. Trouble only makes me angry."

Morbidly exaggerated as this was, there was a dash of desperate and truthful satire in it which ought to have called for deprecation and soothing from any gallant man. But there stood this grim Eliphaz between the two gentle girls, giving little comfort to either.

"Oh, *don't* believe her, Mr. Lane," urged

Nelly. To which he only answered, mechanically, "People who let trouble make them angry are better out of the way of it."

Nelly was aghast. She could not tell what to make of it, and began in a confused and tumultuous sort of way to think that she must have been mistaken all along in this man, who proved so harsh and odious at such a moment. Janet cowered in the large old-fashioned arm-chair, biting her lips and hardly repressing tears of anger and humiliation. Was this the requital of love—"young love, first-born, and heir to all?"

A servant came in and said Miss Lyte would like to speak a few words with Mr. Lane in the drawing-room. When he had followed the girl, Nelly came across and knelt down by Janet, taking her hand and stroking it gently.

"What does it mean, my pet?" she asked. "I *hate* him. He shall *not* come here when you are gone, with his grim, horrible old face, and his gamp!"

But Janet had thrown off her caressing hand as though it had been a serpent, and poor Nelly was on the horns of a sentimental dilemma. Seeing her distress, Janet brightened up with an effort, and took her hand back into favor. "Yes, he shall come," she said, "and you will have all the gentlemen to yourself, dear; for of course poor Blanche can not see any body. Perhaps *he* will make love to *you*: he never did to me."

"He is my brother," Nelly gravely responded. "At least I thought him so until this morning, because you love him."

"Don't be ridiculous, Nelly," the poor girl replied, but scarcely able to say it for the irrepressible sob.

"Oh yes, you do, dear," Nelly went on: "I have a heart, though you think I haven't. I can tell true love when I see it, at least in one of us. And I did think the Tulip loved you, though he *is* so absurdly grave about it. But now I do not know what to think of him. I suppose he is like the rest of the men, and wants money, and that Frank has told him you intend to give away your fortune without your hand."

Again Nelly's hand was flung away like a venomous reptile. "What did I tell you about the Black Tulip, the flower?" she asked.

"Oh, there's only ONE, of course—only one in the world!" replied Nelly, again taking the recalcitrant hand and stroking it. "But, for that matter, dear, there is only one Bachelor's-Button, you know; and I know

he won't have poor me because Captain Lyte left me out of his will." "The Bachelor's-Button" was the botanical title of Mr. Perkins, Nelly's favorite admirer at that time, and a wealthy young man, being distantly connected with the brewing interest, but of a mercenary and unromantic disposition.

"Nonsense!" retorted Janet. "There are hundreds of bachelor's-buttons in the Sittington Woods. How dare you talk like that about Mr. Lane?"

"I thought, dear," this sly damsel replied, "that as you *don't* love him, I could say what I liked about him."

And Nelly went away to sit with her sister Blanche, thinking that perhaps it would be as well for Mr. Lane to find Janet alone when he returned from the drawing-room. For he would be sure to look into the dining-room again, she thought, before leaving the house.

Scarcely had she left the room when Albert came in, approached his sister nervously, and said, in a low voice, "*He* wants his umbrella."

"Did he say so to *you*?" asked Janet, again with that ball in her throat.

"Yes," Albert replied, softly. "He is vexed at something. I could see it in his eyes."

"He is angry with me," thought Janet—"with poor little me, though he is so kind to naughty boys. What have I done? I have taken Miss Lyte's part against my own family, and spoken up for that poor wicked young man because they are all so unjust to him. So would Mr. Lane take his part if he heard the whole story. And now they say I am running away from a house of sorrow. But they would only tease my life out because I am determined to give up a fortune to which I have no right, and which I don't want. What do I want of a fortune? *He* does not want the fortune, *nor me either*."

That suggestion of Nelly's found no place in Janet's mind. She was too noble to think ignobly of the man she loved.

Presently, seeing Albert still standing ruefully before her, and having her heart softened by grief, she said to him, "What is it that you want, you poor dear old Cipher?"

"*His umbrella*," Albert solemnly rejoins.

So she went slowly up stairs and into her chamber, opened the closet door, looked at her captive, released him, kissed his mended wounds, carried him slowly and tenderly down stairs, and placed him supine on the hall table, like a patient in a convalescent

ward parting stolidly from his weeping nurse.

"Why should he hate me? What have I done?" she murmured, plaintively.

Then creeping up stairs again, more slowly, as far as the drawing-room door, she stood there for a few moments, with finger on her lip, hesitating. Did she know that her attitude was a charming *pose*, and herself an exquisite picture of courage tempered with feminine delicacy? I suppose not. Her hopes and fears and purposes and regrets were all too highly pitched, the tension of her mind too strong, for little feminine vanities to play their part. She paused with the mere delicate hesitancy of her age and sex at the thought of intrusion. But such was the temper of her mind and heart at that moment that, had the drawing-room been a powder magazine, and her movements inevitably productive of sparks, she would certainly have entered.

"*I will* see him; *I will* hear his voice again," she said, with a terrible conviction forcing itself upon her that she was about to do so for the last time. Then she opened the door and walked in. It was the principal reception-room in her own father's house, yet she had no right to be there, and was evidently an intruder. Miss Lyte was sitting in a chair by the fire, and only looked up for an instant, taking no notice whatever of Janet. She felt that silent rebuff to be a heavy blow, but the pain of it was soon superseded by a more poignant agony. Mr. Lane was standing by the other side of the fire, with his back to the door, but plainly saw the reflection of Janet advancing toward him in the pier-glass. Neither did *he* pay her the least attention. At any other time he would have turned and acknowledged her presence at least with a courteous inclination. Now indeed she saw him and heard his voice again, for he went on with what he was saying to Miss Lyte: "You know I only effected that mortgage to buy *my wife* the annuity. And fortunately I would allow Bailly to have nothing to do with that. Smith pays *her* the annuity regularly, with the interest of her own two thousand pounds. The receipts in *her* own handwriting are sent to me twice every year."

He turned round. The fair, gentle, generous girl was standing within two paces of him. Would he say nothing to her, this hard, cruel man? Would he smite her thus, and leave her to stagger and fall under his coward blow? She looked into his face

wildly for a little space. His eye met hers—that eye into which formerly she had seen the irresistible tenderness leap from the brimming fountains within. Now it glared at her with pitiless cruelty. Then half turning to the elder lady, he reiterated, “In *my wife's* handwriting, every January and July.”

The stricken deer seeks a forest solitude to die in peace. And Janet thought if she could only reach her room without falling, there surely swift and utter desolation would stagnate the sources of her life, and insensibility would herald much-to-be-desired death. That she could any longer drag out the miserable filament of a human life she believed to be impossible. She thought that her mortal wound was already dealt, and only dreaded to die in agony under the hateful gaze of human eyes. Mechanically she turned, walked slowly and silently out of the room, and reached her chamber.

When she had gone, Miss Lyte spoke. “It is a severe blow to Janet,” she said. “My heart bleeds for the sweet, gentle child. God grant I may soothe and comfort her, and that we may yet find some pathway through this tangled wilderness. In the mean time you have done what is right. We should always choose the least of two evils, and act promptly on our choice.”

“You are right,” he managed to say. But the blow which he had dealt had recoiled with such force that his knees now shook under his own weight, and a giddiness and faintness fell upon him.

After a while he was going softly down stairs, entertaining a feeble purpose of stealing out of the house without confronting Frank. But that amiable person encountered him midway. “Oh, I am so glad you have come,” he said. “Of course you have not seen Janet yet. I am just going to titivate. Come up to my room for a few minutes.”

They ascended to the story above the drawing-room, and passing a door before they reached Frank's, Mr. Lane felt or thought to himself, “That is *her* door, and she is alone within.” He had no certain knowledge of his victim's room, yet some inward monitor told him truly. That really was the scene of her innocent virgin hopes, of her hopeless mute despair. He passed in at the next doorway, and sat on Frank's bed while the Adonis laved and scented himself.

Frank resumed the talk over his toilet as if his letter to his friend had been spoken.

“A wild idea—madness! is it not?” he asked, looking round, and smiling between the ivory-backed brushes. “The idea of giving up her fortune—giving it to an Assassin!” That term of obloquy appeared to render some mysterious consolation to Frank under his recent trials and present difficulties. So he repeated it: “an Assassin.” In his secret mind he believed the moral guilt of the perpetrator of the deed in question to be aggravated by the fact that his prey had been a member of the British aristocracy. But he wisely abstained from diverting Mr. Lane's attention to that abstruse question in casuistry. “I think a certain friend of mine will be able to cure Janet of that insane idea,” he continued. “Love is a great physician. And common-sense, when prescribed by that practitioner, is more palatable than when a brother administers it. It is quite true, as my mother says, that the doctor and not the physic cures the patient. And then it's all moonshine talking about that Bedford Lyte being ill-used. The notion of ill-using an Assassin is too good! And pray why shouldn't you or I be allowed to leave our money (if we happened to have any) to a nice girl instead of to Dick Turpin? And why could not Captain Lyte leave his to his godchildren? And, what is more,” pursued Frank, preparing to lubricate his gums with some aromatic paste, and supposing his queries to be satisfactorily answered—“what is more, he *did* happen to have some money, and *did* leave it to them, £12,500 to Blanche, and £12,500 to Janet.”

Here Frank's monologue was temporarily interrupted by the gum paste, applied with a small sponge on the end of an ivory stick. After which he resumed:

“How that fellow Bailly can have squandered all Blanche's fortune I can not think, nor, indeed, how Captain Lyte can have consented to leave the money so loosely. My father knew nothing about the captain's will, you know, till after his death, and Blanche had been married six months when he died. But, to say the least of it, the Baillys took an advantage of the old gentleman, and have behaved disgracefully throughout. Thank Heaven, Janet's twelve thou' is safe; and it shall not be thrown away or given to an Assassin if we can help it. And what I was foolish enough to say to her about you won't hold water. It was from no want of regard to you; but when I saw you so averse to marrying, and Janet getting so—you know what I mean—I tried



"'WATER!' SHE HEARD MR. LANE GASP."

to check her. I confess it. I didn't want her to sit 'like Patience on a monument smiling at Grief,' and all that sort of thing. But I failed. She stuck to you through thick and thin. And, let me tell you, Lane, though she's my own sister, that Janet is a very nice girl, and the sort of girl you won't pick up in every nasty little radical borough. And £12,500 in consols is a very snug little nest-egg. And the affections of a nice girl are not to be sneezed at because she has a little money. Is she to forfeit the love of an honest man because her godfa-

ther named her in his will? Besides which—*Hullo!* my dear fellow! What is the matter?"

Mr. Lane's face was convulsed with twitchings very alarming to contemplate. "Water!" he gasped, or croaked.

Frank handed him a tumbler of water slightly ensanguined with the cochineal gum paste. This he deliberately, but with a trembling hand, conveyed to the nape of his neck, and poured down his own back. Then staggering to the basin, and leaning over it, he said, "Pour on the back of my

neck," which Frank obligingly did, wondering meanwhile at this sudden illness and its hydropathic treatment.

Mr. Lane now plunged his head into the large camp basin, and, after protracted immersions, stood up dripping. Frank threw a towel round his neck, and hopelessly applied other absorbents to his outward man, after which Mr. Lane spoke.

But before we listen to what he said, let us follow Janet with her dreadful news to the solitude of her chamber and the desolation of her heart. Half stunned at first, she felt the desolation growing and deepening upon her as sensibility returned. With a full consciousness and sense of her present misery, associations exquisitely painful, reviving ghosts of former joys, crowded about her heart. This humble apartment was the scene of all her sweet reveries. Here her conflict with Mr. Lane's stubborn indifference had been planned, here her gentle victory celebrated. On this very bed she had sat at the return from the river the afternoon upon which she had first seen him. In that closet which served her as a wardrobe his retainer had been kept in affectionate durance. It had lain at her feet on the very spot which they now touched. How lightly she had stepped over it into bed! calling it the threshold of his heart, and other graceful similitudes. How heavily now her little feet drooped on the insensate floor! How hard and cold must that man's heart have been all the time when she was decking it in young love's flowery wreaths and posies! Not a tear rose to Janet's eye, not a tender emotion as yet mingled with her grief. In her chastisement she could see no justice, no reason in the furious overthrow of her affections. She had chosen, as she thought, the noblest man, had loved him because he was good and god-like. She was tired of all that was morally mean and paltry around her, and had desired to worship some lofty ideal which would lift her into a purer region, where she might herself grow up to some nobler moral stature.

What sin had there been in her passion? what littleness, even, of which she might accuse herself, and so find retributive justice in what had befallen her? Every one had held this man up for her admiration, her esteem. If she had venerated him, was it not because he seemed above them all in purity, in singleness of heart, in devotion, in truth? If she had loved him with a love

in which, like the breath of a hot wind, her heart now seemed to wither, had not that love been the zephyr of her spring-time? Who and what had turned it to this scorching blast?

Had she wasted the breath of her affections, as many girls do, in fanning a succession of feeble sensuous fancies? Had she not, on the other hand, scrupulously cherished her maiden regard, reserving it till the man of glorious attributes appeared, and then (dazzled by no outward splendor, won by no vain allurements) given it to him without stint, without reserve, without exacting any return?

By no unmaidenly advances, no arts, no coquettings, had she sought to win his love, only by trying and praying that she might be worthy of it, by her beauty (if that might be), by modesty, by constancy, and singleness of purpose.

At this point in her reflections footsteps of two men passed Janet's door, and were lost in the next room to hers.

"And what has come of my two years' devotion?" she asked herself. "He strikes me down. HE. He says he has a wife, somewhere, put away. He has loved once and for all, and left loving before he ever saw me. What does it mean? Can it be true? Oh, why did he not come to me, to me alone, and tell me, and pity me? Then I could have borne it. He flung it at me like a stone, in the sight and hearing of another, without a word of pity, without a look of remorse. Hark! What is that?"

Frank's voice saying, in a high key, "Hullo! my dear fellow! What is the matter?"

She knew who "my dear fellow" was at once, without a moment's hesitation. She sprang to the door, opened it, and crept to the next door, which was slightly ajar.

"Water!" she heard Mr. Lane gasp. Then a pause. Then, "Pour on the back of my neck." Then a long splashing and trickling of water. After which she heard the voice which she still loved, somewhat altered, but still such that she could tell it among a thousand voices, saying,

"Frank, I must ask you to forgive me a great wrong which I have done to you and yours unknowingly; I beg of you to believe, unknowingly. My plea for your consideration, your pardon, is that I too suffer. I can not offer myself as Janet's husband, because—I have—a wife."

"Why didn't you tell me so before?" asked Frank.

And the voice went on, while Janet leaned against the door-post for support: "The story of my marriage is a horrible secret. I have felt obliged to conceal it, though now I see that in doing so I have done wrong."

"You must have seen that Janet liked you," urged Frank; and the frail form without shuddered against the friendly door-post. That she "*liked*" him! Conceive the adulation of her fervid young heart being called a "*liking*!"

"I had no eyes but for *her*," replied Mr. Lane. "My eyes were blinded by her beauty. I did not even see that I loved her. Do you understand, Frank? I love her." (Janet embraced the door-post tenderly.) "Only three weeks ago, on the night of your party, I found it out. Then I feared that she might return my love. Since then I have kept away until to-day. To-day I have said words which, if she *has* allowed herself to care for me, must indeed cure her of this disease."

"Told her you had a wife?" asked Frank.

"Yes; and in a way to make her loathe me as a coarse, base cur."

A long pause ensued, during which, in the painful stillness of the house, the beating of Janet's heart was so audible that she feared it would reveal her proximity to these two men.

Then Frank said: "This has taken me frightfully aback. But I am heartily sorry for you, Lane. I'm certain you are a good fellow, and would have made Janet a kind husband. I always knew you had some confounded secret. But you are so cold to women that I never suspected it was this. Of course you put your foot in it when you were young and foolish, and have grown wise since. I was annoyed at first; but I can find no fault with you at all. You have never humbugged Janet, or angled for her affection; and since you saw danger you have acted like a good fellow. Poor girl! It is very hard upon her. What she saw to like in you I confess I don't know; but that she *does* care for you I am certain. She will be very much cut up. And you mark my words: she will give up her fortune to that Assassin as sure as your name is Lane."

"I should scarcely think he'd be such a scamp as to take it," said Mr. Lane.

"Wouldn't he?" retorted Frank. "You don't know the fellow."

"Don't I!" thought Mr. Lane to himself.

"It's my impression," continued Frank, "that he would have assassinated his aunt to get her money if he had not lost his reversion of it."

Janet returned to her solitude with very different feelings from those which had possessed her a short while ago. Something warm again stirred at her heart. Was it infant love, or hope, or merely joy? She had thought it smitten to the death, and with it all that was sweet and lovely in life had been enveloped in a funeral pall. But this vital principle had only been stunned or momentarily paralyzed with the crushing weight of sorrow which had fallen upon her. It must have been some generous seed which passed rapidly through its hour of decay, and now germinated in the kindly soil of her affections. What was that penetrating, life-renewing, sympathetic glow which pierced the darkness of the grave, shriveled up the envious cerement, and set the pulses of the heart throbbing and palpitating with new vitality, with a life which at once she knew to be eternal, undying, already strangling despair, like an infant Hercules in its cradle?

These questions she could not answer, although they chased each other with a myriad rainbow tints across the mysterious heaven which now vaulted all the former gloom, and swallowed up that former darkness in universal light. All was grand, splendid, incomprehensible, sublime! Welcome sorrow now, welcome trial, welcome suffering, self-abnegation, and hope deferred, if need be. She could bear all now. She dropped upon her knees and prayed for fortitude and continued light, that she might see the Hand that created her put forth to chastise her in love, and with a wisdom inscrutable but worthy of perfect child-like trust, that she might never again believe that she had fallen into the power of the Prince of Darkness, never again stumble so near to that awful fathomless abyss of doubt and dark despair.

She rose from her knees, after a long and fervid outpouring of her grateful heart, a gentle, submissive, trustful, loving woman. An hour before she was a vain girl, humiliated, crushed, angry, rebellious, and coquetting with despair.

Now she went again to her mirror, that glass wherein she was wont to hold counsel with herself, and to try to see herself with other people's eyes, to look at herself as it were from without.

She stood before it meekly, and saw her own beauty, and now for the first time recognized it as the gift of her Heavenly Father, and without any alloy of self-conceit or carnal vanity she thanked the Giver of all good for that little yet potent gift, from the fullness of her heart. Again, through all the shocks and pangs which she had so lately endured, a flash of intense pleasure forced its way upward and outward to her eyes and lips, and broke out in a sunny smile.

"His eyes were blinded by my beauty," she murmured to her own heart. "His dear, sad eyes! He loves me. He loves ME."

Then she sighed, and again said: "His dear, sad eyes! He *must* not love me. I must not love him. But I will wait. I will never be untrue to him in life or death."

"Dear, sad eyes!" she murmured again; "they will be more *sad* now. I thought to make him happy *with my love*; instead of which I have taken his, and may not give him mine. But I will always be true to him. 'Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. O my love! my love!"

So crying she turned away from that tell-tale mirror, and flung herself prone upon her bed, and wept, and wept. Nor were those copious tears all bitter. When she sat up and rocked herself to and fro, hugging her sorrow, some of the pearly drops trickled into her little mouth, and they tasted very sweet.

When Mr. Lane reached the hall he found his *umbra* patiently reclining on the oak table. Resuming possession of this ancient property, he marched away dolefully, notwithstanding its repair, and the favorable interview which he had held with Miss Lyte.

"Well, how did it go off?" the parson inquired, on his return to the Rectory. Mr. Key, of course, was alluding to the important interview with Miss Lyte, which had sunk into quite a secondary place in Mr. Lane's estimation. The words, "How did it go off?" grated upon his highly wrought sympathy with Janet, of whom only he was thinking.

"It was fearful, horrible!" he replied, shuddering, and calling to mind the wild look of anguish with which Janet had appealed to him when those dreadful words were spoken.

"You surprise me," said Key. "I made sure that a woman of experience and judg-

ment and Christian charity would take it well."

"Take it well!" rejoined Mr. Lane, fiercely. "Take it well! So she did. What did the poor girl do or say? Nothing. Nothing. But my brutal heavy hand had stricken her down. Key! Key! are you not human? Are you blind, man? I told her—told Janet—that I have a wife."

The priest was not aware *how* Mr. Lane had purposed to do the task assigned to him, although the secret of his school-fellow's early manhood had been fully confided to him. It was his habit to look more at ends than at the means by which they were to be attained, and it seemed to him well that Lane should have adopted this blunt and straightforward method. "It was a strong measure," he said, "but I think you have done what is right."

These were the very words Miss Lyte had used. How they jarred upon his finer sense of duty to one who had given him love, that priceless, that inestimable boon, the sweet odorous breath of a virgin flower, in return for which he had turned and trampled upon it! Right! What a righteous act to offer to the powers above! Let us hope the anguish of his soul atoned in some little measure for the cruel wrong which he knew that he had done to avoid the risk of doing a still greater wrong to that innocent soul. He would not answer this ghostly approbation. Even a spiritual adviser can not gauge a lover's sensitive conscience, nor analyze the quality of his grief.

After a while he said, as if speaking in a dream: "She is going away in a day or two to spend a month with my aunt. There will be time for her wound to heal: eh, Key?"

"I think so," said the casuist, wishing to console his friend.

"You *don't* think so," retorted the penitent, with savage perversity. "It is cowardly, cold-blooded cruelty; and you know it. I struck her unmanly, foully."

There he paused for a few moments, and then cried aloud in his agony, "My love! my love!" unconsciously using the very words with which Janet had given vent to her own unconquerable passion.

The ecclesiastic was genuinely moved at this display; for he knew this man to be strong and resolute, unwont to be mastered by turbulent emotions. He waited till the great wave of passion had rolled by, and then said, gravely: "As God is my judge, and will hold me to account for any unnecessary suf-

fering which I may cause His children, I believe that He will give her strength to bear this heavy affliction. And your own conscience tells you it was better to speak now."

But Mr. Lane had no patience or courtesy left. "Let conscience go, then," he exclaimed. "I've had too much of it. Let me feel like flesh and blood for once!"

For a few moments nature seemed to triumph in the expression of his face, which almost betokened the consummate abandonment of principle and all else to victorious love. But before this climax was reached a quick shudder convulsed his frame, like a movement in still water coming whence none can tell. Again the flinty aspect of introspective self-control darkened that wilder flash of passion, and Mr. Lane stood calm and strong.

The divine understood the conflict that was being waged within him, and respected it. For in a restricted and somewhat ruthless progress Mr. Key had occasionally paused to study the trial of feeling experienced by those who drift upon the sea of human passion, vainly trying to shape some course by two uncertain stars which they fondly call Moral Right and Abstract Truth.

"Never mind what I say, Key," Mr. Lane resumed, quietly. "I have a cross of the Malay in my blood, you know, and it will break out now and then. Besides, you know the tongue is an unruly member."

"But I *do* mind what you feel," the divine replied. "The battle is for the strong, my friend, and the victor's crown of eternal laurel."

As soon as he was satisfied of his friend's recovered composure, Mr. Key asked several questions about the way in which Miss Lyte had received him, and the extent of her knowledge in his affairs. Mr. Lane satisfied his inquiries, and, indeed, had a most satisfactory report to make on this subject. Bailey's dishonest behavior had shaken the lady's belief in his version of a certain old and grievous story, and only on this very morning she had received a letter from the Dowager Lady Balbry which disposed her to extend a greater lenience to her nephew than he had ever hoped to receive at the hands of man or woman in his proper and original person as Bedford Lyte. Of course the reader is aware by this time (if, indeed, the veil has not been transparent throughout) that Mr. Lane and Bedford Lyte are one and the same person; but it suits the exigencies of the story to retain the fictitious name which

he has borne so long, and by which alone several of our *dramatis personæ* knew him to the end. He appeared, however, to derive little consolation from his relative's generosity. When a mortal and agonizing wound is rankling in the breast, the sufferer would almost rather receive stabs in other places than have his insignificant wounds dressed and bandaged. These small alleviations only seem to mock the greater malady which they are powerless to assail.

When this conversation was brought to a close Mr. Lane went away alone, much to Key's disappointment, for the ecclesiastic had conceived a hearty friendship for the Assassin, and feared that Mr. Lane's purpose was to shut himself up and be alone with his sorrow.

This apprehension was warranted by the event, for the rector saw nothing of his parishioner during the next two days, and on the evening of the second old Ada came to him after even-song with a pitiful tale. "Master has a-shut hisself up with them dratted birds," she said, "and he won't let me nor Mr. Graves come a-nigh him, and he ain't had bite nor sup sin' he came back from London; and deary me, a-deary!"

Two high festivals of the Church! and a Christian man not take bite nor sup from St. John's morn till the day after the Holy Innocents!

The Reverend Cyprian was amazed.

CHAPTER XIX.

CARE KILLS A CAT.

BEFORE the boys dispersed for their Christmas holidays the head-master of the school at Pedlington again talked with his colleague on the painful subject of the distance which had been allowed to separate them. Being thrown so much together, as they had been now every day during terms for two years and a half, and closely allied in the common interest which existed between them and their pupils, being also on terms of old intimacy and proved friendship, it seemed always increasingly strange to Dr. Phelps that Mr. Lane should show such a persistent resolution to live alone, and to retire to his solitude whenever acknowledged duty did not summon him from it. Phelps, although a childless widower bordering on middle age, who in more than one sense of the expression might seem "to

have done with the world," and so much occupied with a literary undertaking, in addition to his scholastic cares, as to have little time for general society (though general society in Pedlington was willing enough to incorporate the Doctor into its community), was yet of that social and genial temperament that he would have liked to sit with his old friend over their private studies and pursuits, and to have shared the hours of recreation with Mr. Lane, instead of sitting and working alone, as he now too often for a widower did, in the long winter nights after the boys had gone to bed, and instead of depending for daily intercourse on his relations with the boys, and with his third master, who was only a gentlemanly Senior boy. Still these scholastic relations were so pleasant and intimate, and especially in summer Mr. Phelps partook so frequently of the games and sports which rivaled intellectual attainments in the youthful aspirations, that he felt himself to be less lonely and less in danger of giving way to melancholy than he had reason to believe was the case with his friend.

Was religion, or were the differences arising out of religious convictions, the cause of the partial estrangement between them? Dr. Phelps feared that it was so. Each year, as he grew older and found himself less and less in accord with religious people of any school or sect, he took refuge in a callous indifference to any prevailing set of opinions; outwardly, and more than outwardly, in some philosophical and subjective sense, conforming to the creed of the universal church, as a body of doctrine generally beneficial to society, if people would only observe the law of charity, and not attempt to enforce any limited interpretation of this code upon their neighbors.

With those who did so Phelps had little patience. And although moderate persons esteemed him a fit and proper guardian of youth in a school where all shades of religious opinion were represented, yet the more zealous pietists of Pedlington, whether High-Church, Low-Church, or of any non-conforming sect, considered him a dangerous guide to the young in a perverse and stiff-necked generation, and prayed over him (somewhat despondently, it must be owned) in their secret council-chambers. He was, they said, upright and highly intellectual. His character was truly amiable. But these qualities of Dr. Phelps only made # (probably meaning "his case") all

the more sad, and *him* all the more dangerous. His good works would recommend his unbelief, so they said. The new rector of the mother parish had been urged to express an opinion reprobating the Doctor's equivocal orthodoxy. But privately that divine would have been far more distressed at the presence of a Calvinist in that influential position, and wisely threw oil upon the agitated waters. He professed to believe that the school-master's theology was only defective in positive or dogmatic vigor, and declared, as he verily believed, that Phelps's sympathies were all in the right direction.

Whatever the real cause, if, indeed, any one operated alone as the source of Mr. Lane's tenacious exclusiveness, Mr. Phelps was still unable to overcome it. His friend even declined now to entertain him for a fortnight at the abbey, as he had done during several previous vacations, pleading a particular wish to go into strict retirement for a while in a clergy-house at the East End of London, after what he was pleased to call "the dissipations of the half year," and the necessity of preparing immediately afterward for his impending move. This was none the less sad to Mr. Phelps from the intimacy which he had seen rapidly growing up between his friend and their new rector, and an evident inclination on the part of Mr. Lane to take the ecclesiastic into his closer confidence.

So the Doctor wended his solitary way to town, where he had to meet Mr. Lane's contemplated successor. He also had work to do among his authorities at the British Museum, and intended to make a flying visit to a German university to procure assistance from one of its professors. On the evening of his third day in London, Phelps, returning by way of Chancery Lane from Bloomsbury to the Inner Temple, where he was quartered on a friend, encountered Mr. Lane, who in the wintry twilight passed him without recognition. The Doctor did not fail to notice the gloom of his friend's aspect, and turning to look after him, saw Mr. Lane striding along grimly, apparently perceiving no one, but wrapt in his own solitary mood. The spot where they met was not far from the door of Messrs. Baileys, Blythe, and Baileys's offices. Not many minutes had elapsed since Mr. Lane had been made acquainted with the loss of his reverend father's last will and testament, as we have

already learned through the humble instrumentality of Joseph Foot.

Only a few days after this encounter a telegraphic message followed Mr. Phelps from the Temple to the British Museum, which caused him promptly to desert some interesting black-letter folios, and take the train for Pedlington. The summons was from the Rev. Cyprian Key, imploring Phelps to return without an hour's delay. It stated that his friend was gravely ill, in mind or body, or both; that Key was alarmed, and anxious for the presence of the only person whom he thought capable of supporting their afflicted brother.

What new affliction could have befallen Mr. Lane? Mr. Phelps knew of none, nor of those which had overtaken the Brownes. A fine moral could be drawn from the situation. But it would be flat and stale, if not unprofitable. Do not afflictions happen to all men? Do our absent friends foresee them? Is not the prodigal son waltzing with a scheming coquette while a fond mother is calling upon him with her dying breath? Will the drowning moan of a sailor husband interrupt the warbling of Mademoiselle Patti to which the fond wife listens with a rapturous smile?

"Is he in bed?" asked Phelps of Mr. Key, whom he found in possession of Mr. Lane's sitting-room.

"Hush!" Key whispered. "He is in there," and pointed to the secret door of the apartment which the birds inhabited. "I slept here last night," he continued; "but he would not speak. He has not even a chair in the room, and must have been standing at the window or sitting on the floor for three days and nights, without eating or drinking."

"What has happened?" Phelps asked.

"I think he had better tell you, for his own sake," replied Key. "The only word he would speak is your name. He shouted to me last night to go away; but I staid; and every hour or two I heard him groaning out for you, as if he was in agony."

"Thank you for sending to me," said the layman, wringing the parson's hand. Then without more parley he knocked at the secret door, and called aloud, "Bedford! Let me come in. You know my voice."

"Who else is there?" asked a hollow voice within.

"Key."

From within: "Beg him to go away."

"I thought so," said the parson, sadly. "I

must go my rounds now, Phelps; but I shall be at home in the evening if you want me. I shall not come unless you send for me."

Turning on the threshold, he added, "It is too severe, much too severe. He is too hard on himself. *I did not prescribe it.*"

And so the confessor departed. And in this brief story, which is but a chapter in the lives of a few humble and every-day persons, we shall see him no more.

Before the sound of the door closing upon him had ceased to echo through the long chambers and empty corridors of the abbey, the secret door opened to admit Phelps; and the latter could see that the occupant of the chamber had been leaning with his elbows on the window-ledge, looking out across the garden and river and the overhanging mist, through which the shouts of barge-men at the lock came with a strange weird sound.

It has been formerly said that this approach to the town had the air of a decayed city. This was especially the case on the river-side. The mouldering abbey with its long range of ruinous walls and offices, the antiquated Gothic church, the quaintly terraced cliff with its gable ends of the old episcopal palace and its pollarded willow fringe, the very canalized river, itself a relic of the old water highways of England, formed a group of objects which belonged less to the present than the past. And while the town not half a mile distant was singularly busy for an English county town, this suburb was almost always silent and solitary.

The chamber in which Mr. Phelps now found himself for a second time was part of an ancient passage, opened by Mr. Lane himself with the assistance of Tobias Graves, in the ponderous outer wall of the ancient refectory, a part of which formed the sitting and sleeping apartments of the present occupier. From the lattice window you saw merely the ruin of an out-house at hand, a broken parapet along the lower edge of a terrace walk, and the misty sheet of water with a small lock-house dimly looming on the farther bank. The narrow space was littered with books and papers. On the deep window-ledge lay a number of time-worn crumpled letters and a faded old copy of a German newspaper. Among these the end of a pistol-barrel caught Phelps's observant eye. The favorite tomtit stood disconsolately among this litter, despising the social charms of the fishing-rods and ram-rods upon which the other birds clustered, doubtless comparing notes on their master's

behavior. A strong aroma of some obnoxious drug loaded the scanty supply of air in the room. But the long arm which opened the door closed it at once. Not a word was spoken while the two men studied each other's faces, one eager and anxious, but resolute; the other gaunt and terrible, glaring at the intruder. His eyes gleamed with a strange lustre in great hollows under his rugged brows. He wore no coat. His arms, brown and sinewy, were bared to the elbow, and his open shirt, from which the studs had fallen, exposed his broad massive breast. If it had come to a life and death struggle between those two, Mr. Phelps knew that his moments were numbered. But he discerned no symptoms of madness in those "sad eyes;" and as soon as this became clear to his perception a great load seemed to be lifted from his own mind and body. He must have expected to make that terrible discovery, or the relief could not have been so great. No; that was not a madman's gaze. It was a strong man, racked and torn with grief and goaded with remorse, brooding amidst the ruins of a life. Key had called him Pontius Pilate; Phelps now silently compared him to Saul, and perhaps the layman's simile was not less apt than the priest's.

A curious characteristic of this meeting between two tried and approved friends was that the usual forms of greeting did not even seem to occur to either of their minds. "How d'ye do?" or "How are you, old fellow?" would have been a contemptible mockery. The Doctor's keen, eager glance searched Mr. Lane's agonized eyes, which in their turn sought the meaning of his almost nervously. The little bird, with its head on one side, also watched Mr. Phelps with narrow scrutiny. When he appeared to be relieved of his first terrible apprehension, and looked toward the litter of papers, the bird gave a sympathetic chirrup, jumped a few little paces, and alighted on the muzzle of the pistol.

"What is this?" said Phelps, displacing the bird and taking up the weapon.

The bird at once fluttered on to its master's shoulder, and eyed the intruder attentively.

"A pistol," said Mr. Lane.

"Yes, I see," Mr. Phelps rejoined; "but what for?"

"Why are you come here?" Mr. Lane retorted.

Phelps hesitated for a moment. He doubted whether he should seem to have come by

chance, but had never deceived his friend, and would not do so now.

"I am come," he said, "to save you from yourself—to save my friend of old days from this hard fellow, Mr. Lane."

"Hard, yes, hard," said the other, slowly, and speaking to himself. Then again, "Hard, yes, hard indeed! Poor child!"

Phelps was not slow to catch the last words. He knew nothing of what had happened between his friend and Janet Browne, but had seen that some little tenderness or friendship was springing up between them, and had from the first ardently hoped that it might be so, and that (though he had signally failed in his own attempt on Mr. Browne) Janet and his friend might ultimately become man and wife, so that half the fortune which was to have been Bedford Lyte's might still become his, and with it something worth the other half twice told; for Mr. Phelps was not one of your philosophers who make light of the treasure of a woman's heart. For Bedford's secret, as a moral obstacle, he cared little and feared less, though it might present material difficulties. His confidence in one whom he had never proved to be unworthy of it was unbounded. For the change of name he did feel sorry, and had strongly dissuaded his friend from persevering in it on his return to England. But Bedford had made it the condition of his alliance, and Phelps had yielded the point.

To the new head-master of the Pedlington School it had seemed almost unendurable that an honest man, his friend and colleague, should take shelter in an *alias* from some old opprobrium. But to Bedford Lyte, the naturally proud and sensitive man, the reputation of Bedford Lyte, the reputed libertine, would have been quite unendurable. Besides which, though Phelps in his generous confidence and in his consummate reliance upon his own approval of his own acts, would have ventured upon opening the school with a coadjutor whose former ill repute might soon get noised abroad, yet his friend had felt sure that such a step would be a false one, and that the moral timidity of the Pedlingtonians would have ill requited Phelps's moral courage. Beyond these two abundant reasons, why need we seek? Yet there was another reason, which of itself would have been sufficient to make Mr. Lane adhere to the *alias* which it had caused him to adopt in Germany.

"Hard indeed! Poor child!" he now re-

peated to himself, speaking slowly and abstractedly, as though he had been alone; Phelps watching him meanwhile with eager eyes and ears, desiring greatly to know and share the whole burden of his friend's experience, that he might, as he said, in the face of his present danger, "save him from himself." This was doubly urgent now. Mr. Phelps liked not the look of that pistol; and if this moment of anguish were tidied over, was not Mr. Lane leaving Pedlington, and again about to cast his lot among strangers?

Could our eyes penetrate those thick walls, it would be strange to see these two men standing together in that narrow dark space, one so intent on the other, that other so careless of his presence. As Frank had ingeniously intimated in their last interview, it was not easy to see the charm about Mr. Lane which attracted people so strongly to him. But the attraction, whatever it was, acted quite as powerfully on the rude as on the gentle sex. Dr. Phelps thought it no more hardship that he should have left his black-letter folios and be here exerting his thankless efforts of friendship in behalf of this man than the Rev. Cyprian Key had grudged his last night's rest in keeping a weary vigil outside Mr. Lane's chamber door. But perhaps the latter may have had some little misgiving of undue severity in the counsel which he had tendered to Mr. Lane. Seeing how fast a hold this love for Janet had gained upon her reluctant admirer, and feeling in his conscience that to indulge it ever so little would be a sin, and wishing for his friend above all things a triumph over the enemy of his soul, he had reminded his penitent that it was better to enter into life maimed than having a sound body to be cast in hell fire. "Tear it out by the roots," he had urged. "Count not the cost. Spare not yourself; rather inflict wounds the rankling of which shall destroy this vice of your blood." And then when old Ada had informed him of the severities which Mr. Lane was practicing upon himself, and when he reflected how terrible might be this fight between a master-passion which had intrenched itself in the citadel and a stern, loyal man resolved to oust and vanquish it, he became alarmed. He thought this man quite capable of destroying himself if the enemy would not yield. He would expect to carry the fortress by a coup de main, and would chafe at the slightest repulse. So Mr. Key had

watched and prayed throughout the night; and in the early morning had telegraphed for Phelps.

"Hard, hard; yes, indeed, hard!" Mr. Lane continued to mutter. "Poor child!"

Phelps was quite at a loss. Did Bedford mean Eleanor Bailly? or had something happened in Pedlington during his absence, and was Janet Browne the subject of this lament? Mr. Lane's presence in the neighborhood of Bailly's office in Chancery Lane, which Phelps had so recently witnessed, inclined him to think that some circumstance had lately revived the misery concerning Miss Bailly, whatever that misery might be. The old, frayed, soiled letters and newspaper in the window indicated the same source of grief and remorse. But some secret power of divination suggested another name, and Mr. Phelps went at once to the point. "Do you mean pretty Janet Browne?" he asked.

Mr. Lane nodded, still gazing intently at his friend, who saw a faint clearing of the brow, as if the confidence were a relief to the sufferer.

"You have formed an attachment for her?" Phelps continued.

Again he nodded. An unbidden tear suffused each of those dark, deep-sunken eyes.

"And she has returned it?" resumed Mr. Phelps.

But now Mr. Lane's glance faltered and failed. His whole figure relaxed its bold posture, trembled, cowered, and finally fell upon its knees at the window-ledge, planting its elbows thereon, lowering the face into the upturned palms, and shaken with convulsive sobs.

Then Mr. Phelps knew that his friend's love had been returned, and that this mutual attachment was not to enjoy a blissful sequel, but that, for some reason as yet unknown to him, it was an unfortunate passion, and Mr. Lane thought he had done wrong in allowing it to take root.

Phelps had never seen his friend overcome by such violent grief before. Yet he esteemed it to be a breaking up of the ice, and a blessed tenderness succeeding the sterner sorrow of the last few days.

It was about four o'clock in the winter afternoon, and the room was almost dark; but still the figure of the strong man knelt in its weakness, and from time to time a shudder passed over it, and at each of these spasms the little bird on his shoulder partly opened its wings and closed them again

with a gentle chirrup, as though it approved of nature's sweet and spontaneous relief. On a sudden a faint glimmer of light, soft and radiant, lit up the bowed head and kneeling form, and threw into bold relief that of the small bird, which uttered a melodious trill, half sad, half joyous, in its minor key. Mr. Lane lifted his head, upon which a golden radiance fell; and presently without, in the space where previously the gray mist had blurred the landscape, a glorious rainbow now appeared. The canaries came fluttering to a perch in the embrasure of the window, and all this little company gazed with rapture at the changing splendors of the bow, which seemed placed there by the beneficent Father in token of His abiding goodness and watchful care over His erring children.

Doubtless this thought crossed the minds of these two men at the same time; for as the bow faded out of the heavens, two gently spoken words were uttered by the kneeling man, and Mr. Phelps (having quickly stooped to catch) now fervently repeated them:

"LAUS DEO!"

Mr. Phelps was sincerely rejoiced that any thing should have evoked on the part of his friend the feeling which must have prompted these words. For they were the first he had spoken since his monotonous reiteration of the words, "Hard, hard!" and "Poor child!"

"May I open the window?" asked Phelps. And Mr. Lane, rising, opened it himself. It was secured inside by a wire-worked frame, which prevented the birds from going out or their enemies from coming in when the lattice was open.

As the fresh air greeted their nostrils, Mr. Phelps, wishing to speak on indifferent subjects, said, "What drug is it the smell of which filled this quaint little room?"

"*Hyoscyamus*."

"Do you take much of it?" he asked.

"Very seldom."

Suddenly the place was shaken with a great shock, accompanied by a loud report. A great smell of gunpowder and cloud of smoke succeeded to the fumes of *hyoscyamus*, and as these cleared away before the draught of air coming up from the river, Mr. Lane appeared with an air of exultation in face and mien, pointing with a pistol through the shattered wire-work. Mr. Phelps first looked at the weapon in his own hand, to make sure that he had not relinquished it,

then following with his eye the line of Mr. Lane's, discovered with some difficulty in the fading daylight the body of a large white cat, lying motionless at the foot of a broken wall.

"At last!" cried the marksman.

"Was it an old offender, then?" Phelps inquired.

Mr. Lane reminded him of his old superstition about his guardian angel or good genius inhabiting the humble form of the tomtit, and told him that a feud existed between the cat and the bird, which puzzled him much, and had made him resolve to take the cat's life. It seems the offending animal would sit in a point of vantage and watch the window for hours, to the great terror of the other birds, his little favorite manifesting no fear at all, which he attributed to the superior nature with which it was marvelously endowed. But he had noticed the bird to ail after each of these feline visits, and one evening, when pussy had been on guard during his absence, Tommy almost committed *felo-de-se*. The affectionate little creature had a habit of sitting for hours on the rail of the fender at his feet, and even roosting there during some of his long winter-night watches. On the evening in question, when he opened the secret door as usual on his return for the night, the bird had flown directly from the lattice window across the room, into the fiery space underneath the grate, where it was confused and dazzled and almost roasted alive. He saved it with difficulty, and was much disturbed when (going to the small window) he saw the ghostly form of the white cat stealing away in the darkness.

Beyond this narrative Phelps could learn nothing as to Mr. Lane's strange antipathy to this creature. Afterward he alluded to the period of his seclusion as "an ambuscade;" but Phelps could not believe that he was really lying in wait for a cat all that time, nor that its appearance and forfeiting its life at the present time were more than a coincidence. However, the occurrence was most serviceable. When a man's mind is almost unhinged with a lever of unremitting anguish, some old familiar turn will sometimes restore its balance. And probably the sudden revival of Mr. Lane's former anger with the cat, and the triumph of his successful shot, may have served to distract his mind from its one intolerable care. Certainly from this time he began to realize his friend's presence. The necessity of fully



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confiding the past to this faithful ally had been urged upon him by Key, and now presented itself to his mind. The old fear of losing Phelps's regard by this confidence revived within him. In short, he began to be himself again after a period of unnatural abstraction and morbid abandonment to a single idea.

"Now the enemy is fairly repulsed. Let us move out of our intrenchments, and give the dead sepulture," he said, quite manfully.

"*Mitte supervacuos honores,*" Mr. Phelps rejoined, with a smile; and added, "I am

very hungry. Let us order some supper as we go."

The faithful Ada was hovering about the door of the sitting-room nervously. "We have killed the white cat at last. Let us have some supper at once," the master said to her. And the good creature gave vent to a great sigh of relief, for she had been tortured with vague apprehensions.

Phelps accompanied him into the old terraced garden, where Mr. Lane persisted in digging a hole and burying his foe, during which operation the bird fluttered to and

fro with every appearance of joy, though it was the hour only for bats and owls to be on the wing. Then turning upon Phelps, who was smoking a short wooden pipe, he said, "Let me have that;" with which request the other silently complied. A breeze was coming up from the west, and the stars twinkled out one by one. They paced to and fro on the long broad terrace walk, where in old times many a monk had told his beads and many an abbot planned the aggrandizement of his house and order, or perchance the very culture of this garden, now infested with kex and other stubborn weeds, the home of rabbits, moles, and rats.

"Why did you come to-day, Henry?" asked Mr. Lane, after they had walked a while in silence.

"I told you truly," the other answered; "to save you from yourself. Key telegraphed me."

"You did well to come," Mr. Lane rejoined; "well, as far as I am concerned. It is an ignoble act, a rash, impatient folly; but I should have done it."

"I believe you would," Phelps said.

"I shall have to bear your contempt when you know all," Mr. Lane pleaded.

"You wouldn't have escaped it so, however fast old Charon had paddled you over."

"If you had only prevented me from coming here with an *alias*!" Mr. Lane urged.

"Ah!" cried Phelps, "that is how the mischief has occurred, is it?" He was too generous to remind the sufferer how strongly he had discountenanced that measure.

"Or if you had only kept me from going to the house!" resumed Mr. Lane.

"But, my dear fellow, I wanted you to go. I had a wish, and it was father to a belief, that she and you would take to each other."

Mr. Lane groaned aloud, "Oh! if I had only told you all, you would have foreseen this calamity, and kept me away."

The unruly but honest tongue of the Doctor could hardly refrain from pointing out to Mr. Lane how his own reticence and want of candor in bearing his own name were at fault. Still he felt a secret conviction that Janet neither would nor could withdraw her love if she had once given it to his friend. Nor did he believe that Bedford Lyte had so acted as to forfeit the esteem of any woman, however noble, pure, or high-minded.

"But now you will tell me every thing, and trust me fully," he said. "Remember,

you are in a difficulty, and two heads are better than one."

"Let us end the year like brothers," pleaded Mr. Lane. "To-morrow I will make a clean breast of it; but—"

"But if you broke the whole decalogue as Bedford Lyte, I am ready and willing to forgive you, knowing what I do of your life under this confounded *alias*, which has now become so much a part of you that you will seem to be masquerading in your own name. But why should you fear my judgment? Why should I be more censorious than Key? I know you have confided in him."

"But Key is a priest."

"So we are all priests," resumed Phelps, with whom this was a pet heresy. "Whosoever sins we remit, they are remitted unto him or her. I don't believe Pío Nono nor St. Peter himself had any more power to remit sins than you or I have. But come and give me something to eat, for the love of Zeus. After all, the old pagan gods are fine fellows, and there's a good deal of vitality about them yet."

Mr. Lane declined the argument, but his mind was not at ease about his friend's judgment. In youth they two had made a compact with virtue. He had certainly broken that pact, and had allowed more than a lustre to pass away without giving his friend the opportunity of pronouncing whether that breach should sunder them or not.

The philosopher ate heartily, undisturbed by such misgivings, and quite prepared to follow in the parson's footsteps, and pronounce a plenary absolution upon Bedford Lyte. The latter gentleman only sipped some beef tea, which his good old Ada had cunningly concocted of meat and isinglass, so that the utmost nourishment was compressed in the smallest compass. Of this she would only give him a small tea-cupful, though he loudly called for more, and affectionately bantered her on having allowed him to fast so long, if, indeed, her story was true, which he professed to doubt.

"And indeed, Dr. Phelps," said the good creature, "if master hadn't a-promised, now that he's going away, to take me with him, I wouldn't ha' been answerable to ye for his life. The many and many a time I've a-been at his door with a cup of this nice beef tea, and he to order me off quite severe! Strong, they call him; so he be; and well he *may* be! Taking things to heart so!"

"Come along out into the fresh air again," said the subject of this oration, disposing his

little bird gently on the back of his easy-chair, where it released its head from under its wing and opened one eye for a wink, as much as to say, "*Au revoir!* I will doze here till you go to bed, which you have not done for three nights, you know."

As we have already intimated, it was the eve of a new year, and the pious rector, without any particular direction in the canons or rubrics, kept it as a vigil, having even-song with a sermon at eight o'clock, and a midnight celebration of the eucharist. "I have used him ill," said Mr. Lane; "I didn't want to be dictated to. I wanted to go out of this dreadful life, and escape from a misery that was crushing me. Ah, Henry, old friend! why did not you save me from myself sooner, and from this last sin, and the misery in which I have involved the sweetest soul that God and nature ever clothed in beauty?"

"The complications may be unraveled yet," Phelps replied, hopefully.

"No," said the other, dolorously; "my sentence is a life one; and I have been stealing into happy households and an innocent heart, like a ticket-of-leave man pretending to be a virtuous citizen."

"That is a case," said Phelps, astutely turning the subject, "where society retains a man's sin. Condemn the poor devil to a life sentence, and it matters not how virtuous he becomes. His one sin is retained, hung round his neck, and poisons every act and thought and feeling of his future life."

Then they turned into the church-yard and walked slowly in the shadow of the old yews which deepen its stony gloom. The weather had become clear and frosty. There was no moon, but the stars were bright and eloquent in the immeasurable azure vault above and around them. The bell for prayers had ceased, and the last of the scanty congregation had straggled in. Phelps had a shrewd suspicion, almost an assurance, of what had passed in his friend's mind, oppressed as he was by an ever-growing burden of secrecy, with the moral perception morbidly quickened (as he thought), with that vague longing which possesses some natures who have not the highest faith to trust some system wholly, to bow the neck of Reason to the yoke of consistent self-asserting Dogma, and to take such consolation as may be had in submission, in so-called Remission and Absolution. But for himself, Mr. Phelps thought lightly of such cities of refuge

"Bedford," he said, puffing philosophically at his pipe in the sweet solemn starlight, and now looking upward through the gnarled boughs of a very ancient tree, under which his friend also was kindling a pipe—"Bedford, what a grand satire this" (here he waved his pipe heavenward)—"this is upon dogma, and ritual, and all littleness!"

As Mr. Lane remained silent, the skeptic continued: "These stars, my friend, don't move majestically with that glorious rhythmic music through their orbs of space to light that unhappy little hierarchy" (probably meaning the Reverend Cyprian) "and his dozen choristers and his score of devotees on their walk to church and back again. No occasion, my Bedford, to call stars and planets, whole systems, into being for such a purpose. A few tenpenny lanterns would do far better."

Luckless penitent! Tossed from Rome to Geneva, from Calvin to Key, and now assailed by a philosopher to whom Calvin and Key were both alike. Perhaps grief, his proper mistress at this juncture, stood him in good stead, outweighing the bomb-shells and hand-grenades of theology in her secret scales. He embraced her, as the unhappy will hug their misery, and she turned a deaf ear to doubt. Bitterly he smiled in his dark resting-place, standing with folded arms, and leaning his broad back against the huge red trunk of the tree.

"And this grim tree," continued the inspector of Anglican schools, "must have been vegetating here, transacting its own affairs with decorous gravity, but laughing at Celt and Roman, Saxon and Norman, Lollard and Anglican—laughing at 'em all in turn under its crumpled old bark this sixteen or eighteen centuries or more."

"You don't mean laughing at their religion?" urged Mr. Lane, now showing some interest in the subject of discourse, which perhaps may have been the object of his wily friend in treading upon such debatable ground.

"Indeed I do," he calmly rejoined.

"Do you know," said Mr. Lane, now speaking carefully and with evident conviction, "this very old tree has often struck me as being a good type of Christianity, with a new life springing continually out of its own decay?"

"And so far you have been right," Phelps assented. "There is a germ of truth still in a mass of struggling decomposition, and

that keeps flashing out into new life, as you say; for truth can never die. But the whole system is out of date and well-nigh worn out."

"You don't mean that Christianity itself is nearly worn out?" Mr. Lane urged.

"Yes, I do. It can not be the crowning religion of the human race."

"I am sure I hope it is," said Mr. Lane, earnestly.

"I hope not," the other said, with no less fervor.

Then a great silence fell upon them, made audible, as it were, by the indistinct Gregorian strains within the church. For a while Mr. Lane, so lately contemplating a final act of rebellion against this creed, was smitten with awe lest it should not be the true solution of life's mysteries. Was faith merely a farce tricked out with sham solemnities? Were all puppets who walk through the church's history from Christ till now? Are the soul's experiences mere tricks of a heated imagination? Do the powers of nature indeed laugh at our phantom fights?

It seemed as though a dark veil was drawn across the heavens. The man bereft of his faith, weak as it was to impel or deter him, was surrounded by dark night. Mighty waves of fear tossed him on their inky summits and wrapt him in their changeful depths. Fierce blasts of doubt and distrust hurried him hither and thither. But now a sweet celestial light moved amidst the darkness and drew near to him. Out of the light there came a voice saying, "It is I: be not afraid." The words were few; but to him their import was very great. Recovering himself with an effort, he said, "Henry, my old friend, do not put Christianity from you because I (or any other weak creature) fall short of my ideal. You would not reject our Parliamentary system because—"

"Wouldn't I?" interrupted the philosopher. "If the people were ripe for something better? And I, for one, think it high time they were."

Mr. Lane was bereft of his argument, but resolved to pursue the subject. "What do you call subjective truth?" he asked.

"A thing being true in relation to one's own mind," was the answer.

"Then," persisted the other, "I have subjective evidence of Christianity which is absolutely overwhelming. I have had a proof of it since we began this conversation. Is that faith?"

"What you call faith," said Phelps.

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"But *could* you not have this sort of faith, if you would humble your intellect?" Mr. Lane asked.

"Faith, I had it once," Phelps answered, lightly, puffing out a long jet of smoke; "but it left me. Or rather *I* left it. It was a phase of experience through which I passed."

"Should you not want it again if you were dying?"

"No," replied Phelps, gayly, but seriously—"no, I think not. I don't think I should feel any better for it on this side the bourne; and if I found it wrong on t'other, I should be ashamed of myself, and horribly afraid to meet the shade of old Voltaire."

Doubtless Mr. Phelps knew there was faith of another and, as he thought, of a higher kind. And of this he trusted that he was not devoid; but limited his remarks just then to the special view of a special faith which was uppermost in his friend's mind.

In such a manner this eccentric sage endeavored to arouse his friend from the stupor into which remorse had plunged him. Before they retired to rest that night he craftily but intrepidly assailed more than one other of Mr. Lane's intellectual strongholds, at once helping to quicken that numbed spirit into a renewed vitality, and betraying on his own part, in politics as well as in theology, a heterodoxy which, if recorded in these winged pages, would go far to justify those pious ladies of Pedlington who feared that their new school-master, with all his talents and all his acquirements, might prove a dangerous guide to the ductile steps of youth.

CHAPTER XX.

A TRAGEDY.

DURING the whole of that New-Year's Day Mr. Lane was really engaged in preparing a mental brief out of which to conduct his defense before the jury of his own convictions presided over by Judge Phelps. The latter judicial personage with a covert smile saw him inwardly toiling over it. "How simple is this pious penitent!" thought Phelps. And of Henry Phelps, D.C.L., M.A., etc., etc., Mr. Lane would often think in almost the very same terms, "How simple he is!" But now something dreadful existed in that simplicity which knew no sin—no

sin at least of the deadly order; for we must bear in mind that Mr. Lane was now bound to regard iniquity from a theological point of view. On whichever side the truth may have reposed, Mr. Lane labored painfully and Dr. Phelps smiled curiously. And during this strange day, unique in the annals of Henry Phelps, while he was waiting to receive the penitent's confession, he philosophized on sin and on responsibility and on what might constitute guilt in the heavenly courts. This man before him, this old and tried friend, had evidently sinned. He could not be a dreamer. He surely had committed some if not many of what their former school-fellow, Key, would consider "deadly sins." Yet Dr. Phelps, "for the life of him," as we say, but really to save his own self-respect, could not kindle in his breast one spark of indignation against the offender. From which, reasoned out fully and at great length and with great perspicuity—for the Doctor was no addle-brained logician—he concluded that, as far as man's judgment could approach the Divine judgment, a man was not guilty before God in relation to the breaches of the law committed by him; that is to say, not absolutely and unconditionally so. Yet this admission militated fiercely against his previous conclusions on this subject. Hitherto, if it had been possible to collect all the facts of whatever kind bearing on a crime, he would have undertaken to measure the criminal's guilt. And hitherto he had never doubted, and even now did not doubt, that his indignation would be in proportion to the malefactor's culpability.

With a half-morbid, half-honest perversity, Mr. Lane *would* believe that he was about to forfeit the esteem of the one man whose good opinion was to him in the place of a conscience. That he had been keeping the regard of Phelps for all these eight years by stealth, by a deliberate concealment of truth, he admitted to himself. The longer this fraud had lasted, the more base it had seemed to him. His own self-contempt on that account deepened in proportion to the sublimity of the trust which Phelps had reposed in him. Over this godlike man who had never sinned he had even assumed an air of superiority, had sometimes actually dared to speak and behave as if his own hidden baseness had placed him on a level of worldly wisdom above his friend.

In the ardor of youth, both loving alike what was noble, hating what was vile, yet

feeling that in them, as in other souls which sought the light, there were possibilities of rambling into dark places, and of becoming at home in them, and finding the darkness to suit their dimmed eye-sight, these two lads had bound themselves together in a solemn compact. They would not fall from their heights. Obstacles might be reached which should impede their upward progress at this stage, or at the next, or the next. These might be overcome each in turn, or some one obstacle or another might prove insuperable. Certain moral summits might rear their heads inaccessible to the weary footsteps or the baffled spirits of these Titans; but fall from any level once attained to would they never. Hand in hand they stood strong in themselves; in each other, in that high and holy trust which all young men ought to have in celestial help which can never have failed them yet. On the threshold of life—there they threw down the gauntlet to the powers of evil. "We will do no base thing," they said.

But for one of themselves those powers which cherish crime and animate its agents had proved too strong. They met him as he walked alone, overbold, and took up his gauntlet. He trusted too much in himself, and fell—fell from his early heaven down, down into a very abyss, a Gehenna of passion. And out of this he had crawled, with an *alas*, with closed lips, and a sullen brow, contracting swiftly and sullenly when one attempted to win his confidence, when one who was noble made generous attempts to encourage him to begin again to be noble by confessing his baseness and deploring it. This false pride, sullen, cowardly, as it was, had bound his old iniquity up with his new righteousness, had made it part and parcel of his daily life for all these years, which otherwise had been fair enough since that one dark episode.

Mr. Lane's self-imposed isolation, though partly the result of a habit both of mind and temper, was mainly traceable to this conviction. And this deep, dreary self-abasement which he thought humility, but which was so closely allied to pride, had preyed upon him and eaten into his very possibility of self-respect—that condition without which a man of true nobility, however humble in attainments, can not be said to "live" at all.

How little those who prattle with glib tongues or who write shallow phrases about suicide can have read the human heart!

If they could trace, or would trace, the inner experiences of a deeply tried man, how often they would see that the mere animal life has proved insupportable to one whose spirit was dead within him because he had lost some needful condition of its life! However this may be, Mr. Lane's secret had pressed upon him with a crushing weight. The injury which he had unwillingly inflicted upon the girl whom he loved with a passion all the stronger for the restraint to which it was subjected seemed a natural consequence of the concealment which he had practiced. His proper misery had driven him to tell more of his baseness to a priest than he had dared to tell to his friend; and the priest had told him candidly that his confession must go further to become complete. This he acknowledged, and resolved to avoid a new deception. But how was the confidence to be given now? When Phelps came uninvited Mr. Lane was in very deep waters. This oldest and best friend came trusting, though injured by exclusion from confidence. He came holding out a hand, and saying: "You are sinking under that heavy secret. I have watched you swimming bravely, have seen you baffling and baffled by the waves of sorrow. I want to pull you ashore and to open that foul bag and cast its contents to the purifying winds of forgiveness, that we two may again walk hand in hand in the sunshine of friendship, still trustfully, as of old, but humbly because one of us fell, and his fall breaks our pride; for we are both men, brothers—nay, almost one man, so closely are our souls knit."

As this generous affection on the part of Phelps unfolded itself clearly to Mr. Lane, he had no longer a wish to reject it, or to endeavor to retain it on false terms, only a deep regret that by doing so hitherto he had injured this guileless friend, and put him now at length to the pain of withdrawing his regard from one to whom he had so long given it. For still Mr. Lane dreaded the result of his disclosures. Without incriminating others, he could not even avail himself of the whole truth in his own defense. The task was a very hard one. Let the innocent only sneer at it! The more this guilty but conscientious man studied it, the less prepared with it he was. The New-Year's Day wore itself out, and a great part of the night, yet nothing had been said upon that subject on which it was understood that at length there was to be confidence between them.

In the long dreary corridor outside the sitting-room door a forlorn old clock struck twelve. The strokes seemed interminably lengthened out, and the solemn sounds went echoing about the gloomy halls and passages. Then the silence was made audible by its sonorous ticking without, and within by the plaintive wail of a kettle on the hob, now parting with its last residue of water in a feeble wreath of vapor, anticipating a swift and fiery dissolution.

"Did you think I was in love with Eleanor as a boy?" asked Mr. Lane at length, speaking abruptly.

Mr. Phelps replied, "Certainly."

"But I was *not*," Mr. Lane rejoined. "I never saw that magic light on tree or bow-er, I never felt that glorious ecstasy called love, till quite lately. The object of my boyish passion was the place which you took from me at school."

"From you?"

"Well, which you got, and I didn't get."

"You did your best to get it," observed Phelps, who desired chiefly to draw out his friend's natural characteristics, and to make him feel and speak simply on a topic too long shrouded with mystery.

"Yes," Mr. Lane assented, "I did my best. I drove furiously, and I wish the race were to come again."

He glared defiance at the LL.D., and the latter glanced at him with kindling eyes and black, bristling mustache. But soon Mr. Lane's countenance fell, in contemplation of what was to come. Still, as a brave yet judicious general will avail himself of all natural and incidental advantages, so he fought from point to point in this dismal history. "I drove furiously," he repeated, "but my horses fell lame. I was undergoing a fire of excitement, anger, and indignation, toward the finish, which you knew nothing about."

"I have often thought so since," the Doctor candidly replied. "But come, fire away!"

"You remember my fight with Baily?" Mr. Lane continued, as if anxious to make the most of his past achievements.

Phelps nodded. His stiff black mustache projected, and his dark eyes twinkled with satisfaction.

"If I hadn't licked him," continued Mr. Lane, "I should never have had to confess any sins; for I should have gone away and hanged myself forthwith."

"Happy dispatch," suggested the Doctor. And Mr. Lane, grimly smiling, appeared to

think that there might be a less satisfactory solution of certain difficulties than the whimsical custom to which his friend alluded.

"You know why I hated him?" the latter resumed.

Again Phelps nodded.

"Yes," said Mr. Lane, seeing that his friend understood the case. "Yes; the brute treated Eleanor badly. He has always behaved ill to every one but his father. *Arcades ambo.*"

"Still," said the provokingly fair judge, "I would put that to his credit. A good son must have a redeeming point."

"Well," Mr. Lane rejoined, bitterly; "the old dog and the young hound together have run me down with fidelity and tenacity of purpose, and, as far as my hereditary advantages went, have ruined me. But God forgive them! And as to my inheritances, let them go. But oh! I little knew how they were torturing *her* until just before the crisis. You know their house was the only home of my orphaned boyhood. As I grew older I gradually saw that George Baily had a secret power over her, to use in my absence, to conceal in my presence. I saw too that a restless devil within her goaded her always to fight him rather than let the strife languish. Indeed, when I was there she often had the best of it, for my presence stayed his hand. In that last Christmas holidays, before our final struggle in which you beat me so ignominiously, Eleanor and I were thrown much together; and to my surprise she clung to me as her natural protector, and spoke frequently of the Bails (her father and brother, as I had till then believed) as her natural enemies. I had no clew to the interpretation of all this."

"Nor have I," Mr. Phelps retorted.

But at this point of his narrative Mr. Lane regarded the expiring agonies of the tea-kettle with mute complacency.

"Come," urged the Doctor; "come, my boy. What was the clew to the secret of her domestic misery?"

"You once remarked an extraordinary resemblance between her eyes and forehead and mine," Mr. Lane replied. "Did it never occur to you to account for that likeness?"

"Never, I believe, till this moment," Phelps answered, after a pause; "but now it flashes across me like a half-remembered dream. Is it possible that she was not old

Mr. Baily's daughter, not George Baily's sister, at all?"

"It is so."

"And was she really Captain Lyte's daughter, and your own cousin?"

"Yes."

Here a silence fell upon them both. Dr. Phelps was considering this strange discovery, and calculating how it might have influenced his friend's character and conduct. The latter was pausing because the farther he went the worse his story became.

"Go on, my boy," said Phelps at length.

"I can not."

"You must, now."

"Oh, the poor infatuated, ill-used, noble girl!" cried Mr. Lane, with a groan of unutterable anguish. "Phelps, my best, oldest, truest friend! how can I tell you these horrors against my own flesh and blood, against my craven self, against my hateful, mad, proud, contemptible self? The poor girl loved me—yes, loved me; and now, at last, I know what love is, and how all else is nothing when opposed to it. Then I knew nothing of love. But if you who saw us together thought I loved her, little wonder that she thought so too!"

"You know I had the Civil Fund pension of £100 a year till I came of age. Well, when I found out the secret of Eleanor's parentage I wrote to my uncle and told him that I declined any further acquaintance with him, and that Eleanor herself had told me of his scheme for our marriage, to which I would never consent, even if abject poverty should stare me in the face."

"Then I went abroad, bidding Eleanor a very curt farewell, and thinking that she would now become her own father's heiress, and would soon abandon her foolish preference for me. I was overwrought and almost distraught with violent conflicts of emotion. My intention was to let my head rest and fatigue my body. I felt the want of a counselor much at that time, and missed you dreadfully; but was sure that if I came to you, you would advise me to make peace with my uncle and accept Eleanor's affection, and those things I was utterly resolved not to do. The old hunters, Captain Lyte and Mr. Baily, had got me in the toils, and I was resolved to break loose and be my own master."

"After a few months' absence I wrote from Basle to Baily, asking him to draw and forward to me my half year's pension, and

to keep my address a secret, answering inquiries vaguely with a statement that I was traveling. That he hated me with a complimentary fervor I knew, but what more could he want (I thought) than what I had voluntarily sacrificed?

"The event proved. He sent the money safely enough; and the diligence which brought the mail brought Eleanor also to Basle. She had run away from a home where she was hated, and thrown herself upon a man who could not love her.

"We did not go on into Switzerland, as my intention had been. My pension would terminate with the expiration of my twenty-first year, and it behooved me to put my shoulder to the wheel. We returned to the German Baths, merely to be within reach of some quiet central towns, one of which I resolved to select for our residence."

Phelps was not slow to notice the change from "I" to "we" in the narrative, and beginning to be greatly agitated, he rose and commenced walking up and down the long dimly lighted room. But Mr. Lane, with eyes themselves fiery bright (could any one have seen them), sat still, reading the mysteries of the burning coals, and seeing in them phantom shapes, while in his ears rang cries from lips long silent. He remained thus silent for many minutes, and the Doctor's suspicions waxed stronger and stronger.

"Go on, Bedford," he said, bitterly—"go on. You wanted me to believe in the devil, and I am beginning to do so already."

"The devil? Yes," Mr. Lane replied, bitterly. "Who threw that poor ill-used girl in my path during our glorious boyhood, when

'many an old philosophy
On Argive heights divinely sang,
And round us all the thicket rang
To many a flute of Arcady?'

Why had I not a home like you, and like almost all other boys? or, if my parents must die so early, out of the course of nature, why must I be sent to a hoary old knave in lieu of a parent, and left at the disposal of a brigand in the person of my nearest relative?"

"'Knave' and 'brigand' are strong terms," Mr. Phelps objected.

Then Mr. Lane told him the story of the double will: how Mr. Baily had induced General Lyte to execute a perfect will before his death, and afterward presented an imperfect previous draft of it to Captain

Lyte, as his father's only existing testament; how the captain had set this imperfect will aside (knowing it at least virtually to be his father's last will), and had left the fortune of which he was lawfully only life-tenant away from the true heir, dividing it between his godchildren Blanche and Janet Browne.

Yet the Doctor did not resume his gentle or sympathetic manner to this afflicted friend, but kept impatiently tramping to and fro, and urging Mr. Lane to "go on, go on," than which perhaps there are no two equally brief words as irritating and vexatious to a proud spirit.

"How am I to 'go on,' as you call it?" he asked, turning savagely upon his persecutor. "How am I to go on if you are down upon me already like this, when, so far, I had been more sinned against than sinning? Pray what had I done to forfeit your esteem up to this point?"

"Then what do you mean by 'We,' after that poor girl arrived at Basle?" asked the Doctor, not sorry of an opportunity for bringing Mr. Lane to the point on this subject.

"I am just going to—" began the latter. Then suddenly turning on his friend fiercely, and flinging humility to the dogs, he exclaimed, "Good God, man! You don't think I wronged my own kinswoman! How dare you?"

In no degree daunted the Doctor came closer, looked him calmly in the face, and said, "Oh, I thank the Giver of all good for this warmth of yours, my Bedford! Now I can bear whatever revelation is to come. But a terrible suspicion had taken hold of me. And I feared that my affection for you was going to be put to too severe a test. Forgive me."

So in the midst of Mr. Lane's confession he was called upon to change places and exercise the virtue of charity toward his friend, and this gave him courage to proceed.

He went on to tell Phelps as delicately as possible that his cousin's love for him, and her reckless self-abandonment in throwing herself upon him as she had done, caused him terrible embarrassment; that, after one or two vain attempts to induce her to return to London, he had proposed to marry her as the only way in his power to save her reputation; that she had resisted him in this design; and that, setting down her opposition merely to a heroic unselfishness, he had carried his point, and actually made her his wife before they left Basle.

Now, it appeared, when according to rule



"FIVE MINUTES AFTERWARD I WAS STANDING OVER THE DEAD BODY OF A TALL, POWERFUL MAN."

they ought to have commenced being "happy forever after," the terrible part of the narrative was to come, and we must let the luckless husband indicate his own sorrows.

"From Schlangenbad, a pretty village embowered in beech and maple woods, we were one day being driven to Schwalbach, when Eleanor showed symptoms of great uneasiness and distress. I could only account for this by the rude stare of a gallant who had just passed us in another open carriage, and whose eyes certainly had dwelt

upon Eleanor for the moment of passing with a look both of recognition and surprise. However, I soon forgot the man and his impertinence, and when Eleanor implored me to take her to Baden, had no suspicion that she would ever be annoyed by him again.

"We engaged apartments on the ground-floor of a secluded villa, which was unlike any other house in Baden. It had been built by an English lady, and had English grates and fenders in the lower rooms. There was also a front garden with railings

in the English style. The public foot-path skirts these railings, and is divided from the high-road by the little river Oos. Rows of linden fringe both path and road.

"I had a notion that Carlsruhe or Stuttgart would suit us as a winter residence, and leaving Eleanor in charge of our good landlady (the person who rented the house), I went off with the intention of being absent three days. But being delighted with Carlsruhe, and wishing Eleanor to see it and help my decision, I returned on the second day.

"The sun had just set as I reached home. I was dusty and weary. I remember even now how dark and cool the little river looked as I turned from it and hastened across the grass-plot to our parlor window. A strange whim urged me to plunge into the stream and end my days by clinging to the roots of a tree under water. Not being either distinctly unhappy or apprehensive of evil, of course I shook off the whim. A startled scream answered my familiar three taps at the window, which, curiously enough, was shut, contrary to custom. Why did not Eleanor run to the window to greet me? Again at the parlor door I was kept waiting, for it was bolted within, and my poor wife evidently hesitated before opening it."

At this point of the narrative Mr. Lane sat staring into the fire without speaking, his teeth chattering as if with cold, and Phelps could see drops of anguish glistening among the shaggy locks on his pale forehead.

"Skip over that and tell me the sequel," said Mr. Phelps, laying his hand affectionately on his friend's shoulder.

"Let me see," Mr. Lane continued. "Five minutes afterward I was standing over the dead body of a tall, powerful man, who must have been comely enough. Eleanor, or her shadow, stood by me ringing piteous hands. She had lost the power of speech from fright."

"Was the man Balbry?" Phelps asked.

"Yes."

"Were they really guilty?"

"Yes."

"And is it his death which lies heaviest on your conscience?"

"No. I had broken her heart by my obstinate pride. She had flung herself away soon after I left England, and her coming after me to Basle was little more than a desperate rush to escape from him and see if I would not pity her."

"Still," urged the philosopher, "you have been terribly punished by your own act in having married her. You had no censure to fear from me."

Mr. Lane heard these last words without clearly comprehending them. Then, as if Phelps had asked him again for his own indictment, he said:

"She revealed the secret of her own birth to me in honor. I cast it in her face, broke off the marriage contract between us, and then left the country, leaving her surrounded with enemies. Her heart was broken, and I half suspect her brain was deranged."

"Yet you married her after all. That should have healed her wounds and eased her mind."

"It was too late," Mr. Lane sadly answered.

"What and where is she now?"

"A Sister of the Black Veil in the convent of St. Agatha, at Ghent."

"Sane?"

"Usually. But sometimes memory overpowers reason, and she fails for a time."

So these two moralists seemed almost to overlook the fact that Mr. Lane had killed his rival. It had been done in the heat of anger, and was half accidental, as the baronet had fallen backward with his neck over the rim of an English fender, and Mr. Lane, having sprung at his throat, naturally fell forward upon him as he fell. The law of the duchy (Baden) took no cognizance of the accident, and it was vaguely reported that the baronet died from injury to the spine incurred by a heavy fall.

Yet it will appear in the sequel that Mr. Lane's expiation had to be wrought out with sighs and self-restraint and unremitting toil.

CHAPTER XXI.

SOMETHING WRONG.

FIVE years have passed since the confession which Mr. Lane made to his friend on the first day of January, 185-. Shortly after that interesting incident, Mr. Lane, under the auspices of Dr. Phelps, entered himself at the college in Oxford of which his friend was an ornament. There he resided for the space of about four years, strove the academical strife, and at length graduated there, although no such name as that of Lane had been registered on the college boards. In short, Mr. Lane had ceased

to exist, and Bedford Lyte (*in propria persona*) had resumed the battle of life.

Of the sixth year one month is gone after those sixty months, and another moon is on the wane. The English clipper ship *Adriatic*, of 3000 tons burden, is homeward-bound, with a strong northerly wind on her larboard quarter, with yards well braced, and every available square foot of canvas drawing its utmost. A magnified ideal racer, she rushes forward, showing speed and strength at every stride, as she reaches superbly from wave to wave, and tosses aside their watery crests, which glitter about her bows in never-ending rainbows.

One little circumstance is noticed by the solitary passenger who paces her clean poop deck. To this we shall presently have occasion to refer. He is not a seaman by profession, but having an artist's eye for the hull and rigging of a ship, and that mysterious sympathy for power which always exists in a strong man, he has wandered up and down the numerous wharves of New York and strayed among her forests of masts without experiencing a more hearty glow of admiration for any vessel than for the one whose deck he now patrols.

The intention of this passenger was to cross in the *Aspasia*, a large mail steamboat which sailed a day or two before the *Adriatic*. But it so happened that a maladroit little bird, an old and familiar companion, had escaped from the window of his hotel, and no consideration would induce him to abandon it. No sooner had the *Aspasia* sailed than the truant (after apparently innumerable futile attempts) discovered its master's open window, and calmly returned to its allegiance. When we record the bird's name as "Thomas," it will not be necessary to state that the single passenger on board the *Adriatic* was Bedford Lyte.

"We may be a week longer," he murmured to himself, pacing the narrow deck, "but I doubt if we shall. I should like to sail on a clean ship which beat a dirty steamer. No Cunard or Collins could pass us at this rate. Thirteen knots the mate gave by the last reckoning; but we have been making far more than that for the last thirty-six hours, according to our longitude. Let me see: thirteen knots are just fifteen statute miles. They could hardly beat that. I know the mail steamboat I went to Vera Cruz in could not."

The passenger, though no sailor, was a fair mathematician and navigator, and Cap-

tain M'Leod, of the *Adriatic*, was any thing but averse to comparing his longitude with that of his passenger after their noontide observations.

Again the passenger struggled with some troublesome compunctions which suggested that steamers cross the Atlantic in shorter time than sailing vessels. "She has waited five years for me, and won't throw me over for five days now," he muttered, not quite with a tone of conviction, for a letter which seemed to burn in the breast pocket of his pilot coat implied that, whatever the perils of the deep might be, at least equal dangers beset his absence from the coasts of Albion. "It is trying her too severely," he continued, tramping up and down the windward side of the deck with such creaking, angry sea-boots that the second mate, vainly trying to sleep below, mentally consigned him to the tender mercies of David Jones—"trying her too severely. I always was a brute. I have always hit my hardest where another man would touch most softly. I ought to have abandoned Tommy and taken the *Aspasia*. It was madness to risk losing her for a tomtit."

Finding no outlet for his angry impatience in any possible action, the strong man became rigidly statuesque, and perambulated the small space with fierce though silent energy, a moving petrification.

The wind freshened, still blowing from the north. It was the first mate's watch, and at six bells (3 P.M.) he came on the poop and gave orders for shortening sail.

"How do you like the blasts of Boreas, Mr. Lux?" he facetiously observed, and furled the top-gallant sails, the mainsail, and the jib, reefed the top-sails, and so made the ship "snug," as he called it, under reefed top-sails, a foresail, and a foretop-mast stay-sail.

"But she'll have to be *snuggerer* yet afore long, or I'm a Dutchman," cynically observed the third mate, who was steering the ship, being the only man on board who could do it singly.

Poor Bedford was so bewildered by the mate's dark classical allusions, and the relative merits of "snug" and "snuggerer," that his attention was partially distracted from his proper woe and fixed upon the dangers of the deep.

The helmsman, who evidently had no sinecure, though he handled the huge wheel with a masterly touch, and was provided with a possible ally in the person of a sailor who shambled about to leeward, regarded

the passenger with less contempt than the sons of Neptune generally bestow on "land-lubbers." He was Lyte's equal in size and strength, though decidedly not his superior in grace. Older than the captain, and probably a better seaman than any on board, he ranked little higher than a mere "able seaman" in the ocean hierarchy. Perhaps as he stood there, not by any means neglecting his duty, but unavoidably looking at the man who passed and repassed him so often in his stern and restless patrol, he saw in his face and mien some indication of the struggle within him, and remembered in his own rude career some hour when his mind had been torn with a conflict of fear, doubt, or self-reproach, to which the perils of his vocation were as mere daily chances. Whether from previous observation or some such present reflection, he now looked at the passenger with a keen interest. The latter returned the look, and gradually entertained a hearty respect for a man of such evident power and gallant bearing.

"How is it you are alone at the wheel in such a heavy sea?" he asked, observing the manifest labor of his position.

Solemnly expectorating behind the wheel, as if he had intended to deliver an oration, Mr. Crays jerked his head toward the amphibious person to leeward, and then, with something between a wink and a blink, devoted his powers exclusively to the compass and the helm. At this moment another sailor brought the binnacle lamp, already lighted, and placed it in its position; but Lyte noticed that Crays scarcely saw him, steering on solemnly, and considering the access of a lamp to the compass no more than we notice the rising or glimmering of a star at night.

Perhaps a little piqued at the man's reticence, Lyte stood and looked at the compass for a minute by the new light of the binnacle lamp, then at Mr. Crays, observing the effort which his control of the wheel cost him, and then said, "Why is she so heavy in hand?"

The helmsman cocked his eye, shifted the plug of tobacco in his mouth, and looked knowing, but tacitly declined to converse.

Rather pleased now and amused at his persistence, Lyte was withdrawing by the companion ladder, when the amphibious one shuffled up to him, and with a scrape remarked, "Muster Crays ee wunt spee-uk at t' wheel." Then he shuffled away again, and the passenger retired, wondering wheth-

er the apologist came from Somerset, Dorset, or Devonshire. Thus even the current of events at sea will serve to distract a lover's reverie.

At eight bells, that is, at 4 o'clock P.M., as the sun was sinking toward the horizon behind the good ship *Adriatic* in a great blaze of crimson cloud, Mr. Lyte requested the steward's boy (a colored man about fifty years of age) to ask Mr. Crays to step into his cabin, which that mariner shortly did.

"You see, I am anxious, Mr. Crays," said the passenger to his guest. The reader will understand that the third mate had no quarters among the gods in this part of the ship. Mr. Lyte continued: "I asked you why she was so heavy in hand. I am no seaman, but— Will you oblige me by taking a nip with me?" Whereupon Mr. Crays took his noggin of rum like a man, and Mr. Lyte took another, each blinking at the other in true nautical style. "But, as I was saying, you were too busy to answer me. Now why does not the ship answer the helm more easily? I am terribly anxious to be at home."

"You see, Sir," the third mate replied, "she be a sight too deep in the water."

So speaking, and wiping his mouth with the back of his brawny hand, the mariner bowed and withdrew.

"Another west-country man," said Mr. Lyte to himself, having obtained little further information except a confirmation of his own opinion. But pursuing Mr. Crays to the main-deck, and finding him hesitating about a favorable moment for making the rush forward, he urged the question. "Is there any thing wrong with her?" he asked.

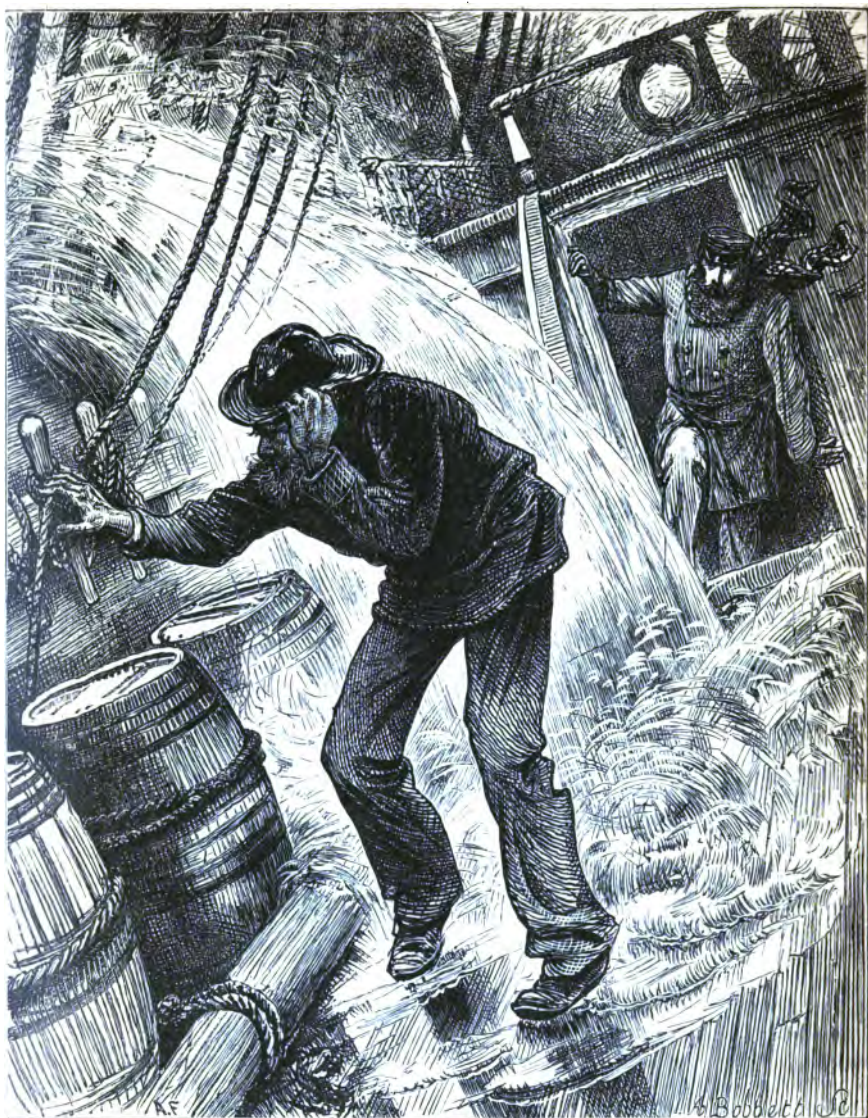
"Best ship out of London dock," was the curt answer.

"Any thing wrong with her cargo?" the passenger persisted.

"Good enough, for that matter," replied Mr. Crays, "but rayther too much of it. Wheat in bulk, you know." Then, as the water rushed out at the lee scuppers, he made his advance gallantly, and was soused from head to foot with the crest of an ill-disposed wave which took that opportunity of dashing over the bulwarks.

"Poor old devil!" the passenger calmly observed, rather enjoying the immersion of his taciturn friend.

Mr. Lyte was the only passenger on board the *Adriatic*. After completing his university course at Oxford he had accepted an engagement to Mexico as correspondent of a London review, and was returning to En-



THE THIRD MATE OF THE "ADMIRALTY."

gland by way of New York. The delicacy which prevents a passenger in every instance from asking impertinent questions about the ship to which he has intrusted his life and his personalty was in this case loubled by the fact that his passage was a gratuitous act of courtesy extended to him by a mercantile firm (agents of the London owners) whose acquaintance he had made luring his brief stay in the Island City.

The circumstance which had attracted his notice before Mr. Crays's reluctant admission was the extraordinary depth of the

ship in the water. Even in the smooth sea through which they had sped their way for the first few days the water had continually gurgled in at the scuppers on one side and out at the scuppers on the other side, washing across the main-deck in a manner more conducive to cleanliness than security. Latterly they had enjoyed a strong leading wind, with only a moderately heavy sea, and though the ship leaned over to leeward much less than Lyte's previous experience had led him to anticipate, yet now and again the summit of a wave curled over her bul-

warks and flooded the decks from poop to fore-castle. The poop and fore-castle decks were so lofty that they remained comparatively dry. But even a landsman could see at a glance that a vessel encountering only moderate weather ought not to be half under water. And certain angry murmurs of the crew, to which it was impossible to remain deaf, had aggravated Lyte's suspicions of *something wrong*.

Already he had ventured on a faint and delicate hint to Captain M'Leod, who had received and hitherto uniformly treated him in the friendly spirit suggested by the very terms of his passage. The captain's testy answer to that hint had absolutely convinced him of impending danger. It was clear to an unprejudiced observer that the captain, being a fifth-part owner of ship and cargo, was reluctant to admit the over-lading of his vessel, and yet was perceptibly annoyed at the avaricious policy which had overridden his judgment and sent him to sea in charge of an enterprise involving so much property and so many lives beyond his own.

With regard to the particular advantages or disadvantages of "wheat in bulk" as a cargo Mr. Lyte had hitherto obtained no experience, and the etiquette of his position rendered the asking of any questions a delicate matter. Mr. Cray's reticence, added to the captain's manifest testiness, made it clear that his duty to himself and all concerned now imposed silence upon him. Why "wheat in bulk," that is, in one undivided mass, in the hold of a sound strong ship should be more dangerous than wheat in sacks, he was at a loss to apprehend. Above the hold, or "between-decks," there was, as it seemed to him, a whole cargo of quite another character. This consisted entirely of American clocks, packed two dozen in a case, and also some heavier cases containing sewing-machines. This upper cargo occupied the region inhabited by passengers in an emigrant ship, and had been stowed while Mr. Lyte was putting his effects on board and making his little arrangements for the voyage. The freight both on wheat and machinery was so high and space so valuable that no ship's stores, and no water except in the iron tank forward, had been placed below. The main-deck under the bulwarks was lined with double rows of casks of fresh-water and barrels of provisions firmly lashed together, and, as it seemed to the passenger, impregnable to the assaults of wind or wave. The poop deck,

however, and the fore-castle, though separated by the entire length of quarter and main decks, like two islands with an angry sea between, were free both of waves and artificial incumbrances. In a word, the good ship *Adriatic*, from mast-head to keel, was one to cause the breast of a landsman to glow with admiration; and despite her rigidity and unseemly depth in the water, Mr. Lyte would have constantly and sincerely thanked the Messrs. Dearborn for giving him this passage had it not been for a tiresome letter which kindled agony in his breast.

After clear and bright weather, with a fair or leading wind from Sandy Hook, they had encountered fogs off the Newfoundland Banks, and were as yet hardly clear of these dubious shallows. At eight o'clock in the morning, however cold it might be, the passenger used to emerge from the cuddy door, and have a dozen buckets of sea-water pitched over him from the poop deck above. This, far from being irksome labor, was a bit of fun for the sailors while washing decks. With the help of an occasional chat with Captain M'Leod and the mate, and his observation and calculations at noon, and his perusal of some novels purchased of Messrs. Harper before leaving New York, he managed to pass the short wintry days, and at night would lean over the taffrail, smoking his old wooden pipe, and fondling that quaint tomtit, which had become so familiar with his irregular hours as to roost indifferently by night or day. To his astonishment one evening as he leaned over the lee rail a hand heavy as his own was laid on his shoulder. He knew that M'Leod was pacing the deck to windward; but they had not been overfriendly since his inconsiderate question.

"Mr. Lyte," said the captain, generously, "you thought me a bit crabbed with you, day before yesterday, when you asked me a question. So I was. A man don't like to be catechised in that way."

"I most sincerely apologize, captain. The truth is, I am such a landlubber that I don't know how to behave as a gentleman on board ship."

"Stow that, Mr. Lyte," the captain replied. "It strikes me you won't act otherwise than gentleman-like at sea or on land. I may not be exactly a gentleman myself, but I know one when I come across him, and—"

"Pray stow that, captain," Lyte broke in.

"you surely can not take me for a sham swell. I work for my living almost as hard as you do, and never hope to travel with a better gentleman than you are."

"I know something about you from Messrs. Dearborn," M'Leod rejoined; "and my own wife's brother is a fellow of one of those colleges, though not half the man you are. I ought not to have cut up rough with you the other day. I can remember many a time asking my brother-in-law questions about his colleges and colleagues, and thinking him a very little-minded man for seeming a bit impatient with me because I pushed him with questions on what was A B C to him, but Greek to me. The truth is, I'm a kinder put out with this overlading of the ship. It was done against my judgment, and ain't doing justice to me nor the ship."

"I take what you say as a generous expression of good-will and confidence," said Lyte; "and if you have an opportunity of putting it to proof, I hope you'll find me worthy of it."

"Well, Mr. Lyte, there's no saying what may happen," the captain replied, somewhat moodily; and then repeated, "there's no saying what may happen. Things don't look so ship-shape as I could wish. But I have a rare good ship's company. The three mates, boatswain, carpenter, two boys, and four able seamen have stuck by me for these ten or twelve voyages." Then turning sharply on the passenger, and betraying a remarkable mixture of resolution and hesitation in his keen black eyes, M'Leod suddenly asked, "Do you hear them growling at all?"

For a few moments Lyte hesitated, with downcast eyes, and probably those few moments were sufficient to convey an unspoken affirmative to the skipper's ready apprehension. But still he waited as if for an answer, to prove his man; and Lyte said, meeting his eyes calmly and firmly, "I don't walk about your deck eavesdropping, Mr. M'Leod; but I don't mind saying that since I have seen how deep the ship is in the water, and how stubborn to her helm, I have regretted being your guest, for I have an object in reaching home."

"So have I, Lyte," said the honest seaman, again laying the heavy hand on his shoulder. "I have a wife and a little girl on the coast of Sussex, and I should be loath to leave them for good and all. Come down to my cabin and have a quiet glass with me."

And down the two veterans, the sturdy sailor and no less sturdy landsman, went. Before they parted that night the latter understood something about "wheat in bulk" and its disadvantages, or rather the disadvantages of those who carried it beneath their feet as cargo. Unlike wheat in sacks, which retained its position however the ship might lurch, "wheat in bulk" was apt to shift to starboard or to larboard in some sudden lurch, when its own mass and weight would force it to maintain that new level, so hostile to the well-being of the vessel in which it lay, like an imperfectly digested repast in the abdomen of a suffering giant. But if the vessel should admit an insidious rivulet of water through one of its thousand seams, this horrible mass would swell and swell, still refusing to move, but distending its awful bulk until the sides of the doomed ship (forced open from within) gaped wider and wider to receive the all-devouring ocean. Mr. Lyte had also learned why American clocks should be placed between-decks instead of in the hold, and how it was that an officer who was part owner of the ship he commanded was unable to control the tonnage of her cargo. But beyond and even below these mysteries he reluctantly discovered that his honest captain was a secret devotee of Bacchus.

At midnight, when the watches changed, M'Leod went on deck for a few minutes to leave his orders with the officer of the watch, and Mr. Lyte ran the gantlet of the scudding spray which swept the main-deck, making his way forward to smoke his last pipe on the fore-castle with the man "on the look-out." A certain delicacy of feeling prevented him from even allowing further conversation on the subject of their common danger; and when the genuine British growler manifested itself in his companion, Mr. Lyte cut him short, saying, "You ought to have protested before she sailed if you saw any thing wrong. The best thing to be done now is for us all to pull together, and if any thing *does* go wrong, to pull it right again." "Old Blowhard," as this look-out man was denominated, stared at his companion in the dim moonlight with a puzzled wonder, until, as they approached the after limit of the fore-castle in their short promenade, a heavy sea struck the ship on her weather quarter, shaking her from stem to stern, and a considerable portion of the crest lashed both their faces with its briny scourge, blinding them to every thing ex-

cept the necessity of self-preservation, which they immediately recognized by clutching hold of the nearest rope and crouching till the shock had subsided.

"And I should like to know what *you call that*!" retorted Mr. Blowhard, as if Lyte had previously been naming all the animals in Noah's ark.

"You have more experience of foul weather than I have. What do *you call it*?" asked the landsman.

"Foul weather and *foul play*! Them's what I call it. And d——d bad steerin' too, gettin' her into the trough of the sea like that."

"I could have told that Mr. Crays was not at the wheel myself; but what *do you mean by 'foul play'* We're all on board the same ship."

"But *the howners ain't*," bellowed Mr. Blowhard. "They gammons a man into signing articles for the return voyage, and then loads her down to the water's edge to come home in Febru-airy acrost the o-ocean."

"But the captain's on board," the passenger mildly remonstrated.

"I didn't say as he warn't," savagely retorted the mariner. "Though he is a fifth-part howner. The ship's insured. The cargo's insured. *Ee's* insured. And what's more, he lushes within a hinch!" By which latter laconic form of words the seaman merely expressed his recognition of the dismal fact which Mr. Lyte had already been constrained to admit. So they parted in melancholy concord, and with mutual respect.

The *Adriatic* being on the port or larboard tack, Mr. Lyte's cabin being on the larboard side of the ship, and his berth on the same side of his cabin, he was liable literally to tumble out of bed if the ship should lean overmuch to leeward, or particularly if she should lurch suddenly in that direction, especially as the steward in his hospitable zeal had accommodated the guest with two thick mattresses, thus raising his recumbent body almost to a level with the summit of his bed-board. As yet, however, the ship, with a strong breeze, rising at times to half a gale, abeam, *i. e.*, at right angles to her course, had sped majestically on her way, deviating from the vertical and horizontal lines but little until this evening. The mercury, however, had been going steadily down for twelve hours or more; and though the pale moon was doing her best to illuminate the shroud of mist which hung over the sea, other indications of a coming storm were

not wanting to an observant eye. "Tuck yourself in tight; you'll have a bit of a roll before morning, if I'm not mistaken," the captain had said to him when they parted. But Bedford Lyte was accustomed to inconvenience, and only thought about storms and tempests as the possible means of delaying his arrival at an English port. If only the gale were favorable, it might blow, so far as he cared, until their balance of life or death should hang poised in the crest of every billow, so long as they could only run before it, fly before it, outstrip the fastest mail steamer, and distance the very sea-birds in their flight. The only thing he dreaded was heaving to and consequent delay.

The landsman had tucked himself tightly in, and was by the exercise of a strong effort gradually falling into the arms of Morpheus, when he suddenly became conscious of a very different fall. However it may have happened, he was involved, head-foremost, like a netted lion, among the legs and lashings of the long cuddy table, and the door of his own cabin was playing a tattoo on the calves of his legs, which protruded across the space between the table and the bulk-head.

Crawling back again ignominiously to his retreat, and relighting his swinging lamp, Mr. Lyte took Frank Browne's last letter from the pocket of his pilot coat, and spent a restless hour in reading it and poring over its contents. Fool that he was not to have left America two days before by the *Aspasia*, that fast mail-boat which always accomplished the voyage in twelve days, sometimes in ten!

The letter certainly contained much to distress him; and now that he came to look at it calmly, as he said to himself, but really less calmly than before, he was amazed at the frivolity which had beset him in New York, and had induced him to let the *Aspasia* sail without him. Then his eye turned to the innocent cause of that delay with anger: perhaps the first time he had so looked upon it during all those years. And now the age and infirmity, the unwavering fidelity and constant love, of the little creature disarmed his wrath, as it stood roosting on one leg in its ridiculous manner, with head under its wing, like a ball of fluff, on the rail which supported the curtain of his berth.

"Poor little Tom!" he exclaimed, relenting. "True friend and faithful companion! And never played me a trick before in "

my wanderings. He is getting old and stupid; and the multitude of the windows, all so exactly alike, in the hotel confused him. No doubt he flew to a hundred wrong ones in succession, and found them shut, or saw strange faces within, and went back disconsolately to those bleak skeletons of trees, where he would have died if I had left him. Perhaps the climate of Mexico has affected his brain. Never mind, Tommy!

“You and I are old:
Old age hath yet his honor and his toll:
Death closes all.”

Remarkable and almost superstitious as his trust in the bird's preternatural instincts had hitherto been, it did not once occur to him now that any benefit should accrue to him from having missed the steam-ship and sailed in this half-doomed *Adriatic*. On the contrary, each time he read and re-read Frank's letter he regretted the delay more and more, and cursed his own carelessness for letting the bird fly out of window in the midst of a crowded city, and from such a difficult window to distinguish among others.

But before looking over the distressed passenger's shoulder and reading his letter, we must flit to other scenes and incidents of an earlier date.

CHAPTER XXII.

HIM! WHY, HIM!

For a long time past there had no longer been any unpleasantness between the Brownes of Pedlington and Bedford Lyte, as the possessor of that once-hated name. To tell how this happy reconciliation came about is our present office. That epileptic attack which broke down the resistance of the sturdy old lawyer on a certain Christmas-day some five years ago was followed by a terrible prostration which at first affected, or seemed to affect, mind and body. The doctors (and we may be sure that plenty of these learned wights attended his temporary couch in Dover) were decidedly of opinion that this was likely to result either in a very alarming crisis or in an ultimate tendency to yield to a very judicious and energetic treatment extending over a period of twelve or eighteen months. A tremendous gun of the largest calibre was telegraphed for. He came from the metropolis, and was, Frank declared, only distinguishable from the Pedlington and

Dover authorities by the superior ticking of his pocket chronometer, which was furnished with a complete system of second-hands, and fingers indicating fractions of seconds. After a profound and costly consultation these magicians declined to state which of the above results would supervene, or how soon, or even whether either of these results, or any thing else, would certainly ensue. But the doctor with the great watch and the fabulous fee hinted to Frank that he would be unwise to neglect any little documentary arrangements (usual in such cases) while the patient retained some use of his mental faculties and right arm.

Thereupon all the Brownes were summoned, by telegraph and otherwise, and, as the custom of their family is when any member of it is about to die, assembled from the four corners of the county, from the hills of Surrey and the downs of Sussex. They came from Pedlington, from Brownleigh, from Farfield, from Tiddenden and Benterden and the remoter regions, until every bedroom in the old Castle Hotel at Dover was engaged for a Mr. Browne. The reader will understand that these good old-fashioned Tory families still patronize “The Castle.” The new and meretricious “Lord Warden Hotel” is for your traveling Americans, Russians, and Frenchmen, or mere English waifs and strays.

So about a baker's dozen of far-off cousins, including Uncle Robert, the head of the family, from Brownleigh, sat down lugubriously to greasy mutton-chops and damp potatoes at the common table in the frouzy old respectable coffee-room. I say lugubriously, although a grim hilarity usually prevails on these occasions, because a deadly feud existed and almost raged between every member of this affectionate group. Robert Browne, Esquire, of Brownleigh, had especially infuriated each one of his connections and relatives, remote or near, by charging his estate in order to bestow upon that insidious warrior, Robert Browne junior, a lieutenant and adjutant in her Majesty's—th Regiment of Infantry, an annuity of £200 per annum. One Mr. Browne, a lawyer from Tiddenden, devoured all his smoky mutton without salt because the waiter had placed the salt-cellar near an obnoxious young clergyman, the Rev. Timothy Browne, from Benterden. Not even about the weather would they converse, although it happened to be execrable, and



"FAR-OFF COUSINS IN THE COFFEE-ROOM OF THE CASTLE HOTEL."

they were all damp; and the waiter, who was more or less acquainted with each one of them severally, made two or three feeble attempts to kindle a glimmer of intercourse on this pleasing topic. The ferocious dignity with which the youthful ecclesiastic said his "grace before meat," alone, and standing with folded palms, seeing that all the others fell to unceremoniously (which they only did to annoy him, each being accustomed on other occasions to the same ceremony), was a study worthy of Hogarth.

After this dismal repast they each went

in turn, glided into the dark chamber, stared at their dying relative, took up his unresisting hand, held it for a moment, then dropped it like a hot potato, and shuffled out of the room with an awkward and guilty aspect, as if each one had surreptitiously pocketed a silver spoon. It had been stipulated by Mrs. Browne beforehand that not a word should be spoken. He was not strong enough to bear it, she said; the fact being that he had quarreled with every one of them except Uncle Robert, to whom alone he now gave his blessing, calling him

a "dear fellow." The honest elder brother shed a tear as he dropped the hand, but none the less looked guilty and uneasy as he left the audience chamber. One exception to the general behavior shone out in the case of the young clergyman. Long-coated, severe-cravatted, smug, prim, sleek, and carrying a book with a gilt cross upon it, he commenced a pious address to his dying uncle.

"Take him away," gently observed the invalid, turning to the wall. "Take him away. I never could bear the sight of him."

And Mrs. Browne led him out, dimly conscious that he was alluding to pearls and a quadruped not famous for cleanliness or gratitude.

These were Walter Browne's funeral obsequies. Yet it is only fair to add that not one of these gentlemen expected a shilling from him. Amiable and affectionate each in his own household, it was the habit of the family to quarrel among its remoter members during life, and at the portal of death to draw a veil mournfully over the preceding disagreement.

The good man had long ago made up his mind as to the disposition of his worldly affairs. As every wise man does, he made his last will and testament when sound in body and clear in brain. So strongly did he feel this duty that not even the severe calamity which had befallen Blanche would induce him to meddle with a will once made. No codicils for him, or chancery suits for his family. Let Blanche live with her mother. Let Frank save a remnant of her fortune if possible. If not, let it be. By no means let Frank prosecute that scoundrel George Baily. His sin would find him out; and probably Blanche would forgive him in the end, if the man had ever loved her at all, or she him. These were some of Mr. Browne's funeral observations. But not all.

Calling the family whose acquaintance we have made in their native town round his bedside, he said: "There is one reparation I would make before I leave a world of blunders, of lies, of trust and distrust alike misplaced. I wish every member of my own family now present to join in this solemn act of justice."

Janet here crept to his side, knelt down, and seized his pale hand. Mrs. Browne, who was sitting there, made way for her, still bending over her child and her husband's hand.

"A noble young man," Mr. Browne went on, "has been calumniated to us by one whom I would speak of more severely if Blanche had not already suffered unjustly. Bedford Lyte, whose name I forbade in my house for twelve years, was utterly misrepresented to us, he and his conduct, by George Baily."

How Janet squeezed and kissed that pale hand, and how Frank's and Albert's eyebrows went up and up, for neither of the young men knew yet who Mr. Lane was.

Mr. Browne continued: "I have, thank God, been able to sift the matter before I die. Your mother has in her desk Lady Balbry's written admission that her son, Sir Thomas, ruined that poor girl who visited us once, and whom Captain Lyte allowed us to call Eleanor Baily—for shame to his memory!"

Now Albert's forehead threatened entirely to disappear, so high did his scanty eyebrows ascend to his glossy poll.

"She was," resumed the sick man, "a prenuptial child of poor Mrs. Baily."

If he had said *Poluphloisboio Thalasses*, Janet would have had quite as distinct an apprehension of his meaning. All she knew or cared to know (and it was already intuitively known) was that her lover was going to be justified.

"Bedford Lyte, poor fellow," Mr. Browne resumed, "did actually kill Sir Thomas Balbry for ruining that girl. But in the mean time—do you understand me, Frank?—I say, between the baronet's villainy to the girl, and his being killed by Bedford Lyte, the young man had been most basely tricked into marrying the girl himself."

The stout old Briton fell back exhausted here; and though the great revelation had not come, a kind of prescience, or at least premonition of it, was breaking upon them all. Although Janet was no more enlightened than the rest, her behavior seemed to lead to a true solution of the mystery. Mrs. Browne was in the secret, and though trembling for her husband, was anxious to see this act of justice accomplished. She presented him with a wine-glassful of strong beef tea, and then another of port-wine, after which he resumed:

"If that wretched girl is living, I say with sorrow she is still his lawful wife."

Here Albert, taking advantage of another pause induced by his father's weakness, solemnly interposed: "Frank and Robert"—for the Marauder was there, but so depressed

and subdued in the presence of this sorrow that all his vivacity was gone—"Frank and Robert, what did I say? *Wrong there was. Why should we put it all into one scale? And again, I should be sorry to see any sister of mine as easy with gentlemen as Miss Baily was.* Now you see. Who was right?" But neither of his former antagonists cared now to enter into the lists with Albert.

Mr. Browne continued: "This brave and generous though foolish youth has grown up a brave, generous, and foolish man. Less than a month ago, George Baily, who when a mere lad had entered into this vile plot with his father, produced what they had secreted from the captain, namely, a rescript of General Lyte's will, perfect and perfectly executed. He offered this to Bedford Lyte for a price. The young man chastised him in the presence of a servant, and destroyed this indisputable will, by which he knew himself his grandfather's heir, in the presence of three persons. By that act, Janet, my dear, this young man, in the flower of his youth, has lawfully given you of his own free-will that which Captain Lyte only gave you unlawfully on his death-bed. I objected to the first bequest. I always disliked Captain Lyte's will. This gift I can not cavil at. The young man is very noble—very noble!"

Poor little Janet, still kneeling dejectedly at her father's bedside and holding his hand, in which from time to time she buried her face, saw not whither all this mystery was tending. "I always *knew* he must be a duck," she sobbed—"a real duck! But, all the same, I shall give him back his fortune when I come of age."

A faint smile again played over the dying man's face. He took his hand from hers, and laid it gently on the beautiful head nestling at his side, on which a furtive glimmer of sunshine played and reminded him of the glad old days of Pedlington.

Again speaking, with the light of that smile on his face, he said, "You won't beat that man in generosity, my Janet; but come now quickly, for I am weary: *who do you think Mr. Lane is?*"

This question fell literally like a thunderbolt at the feet of all present. Doubtless mysterious combinations and coincidences had begun to direct their thoughts in the right groove. But not one present except his wife really knew or was prepared to divine the old man's secret. He looked round at them all with a more benignant and joy-

ous smile than they remembered even in his day of health and strength. Only Albert had already suspected the truth, and then abandoned it in bewilderment.

"HIM!" cried Janet at last, defiant of Lindley Murray, and starting up with blushing cheeks and flashing sapphire eyes. "HIM! Why, HIM, of course!" Then she knelt down again, coaxing her father's poor pallid hand.

Mrs. Browne patted her comely, shapely head, decked with its masses of loose golden hair.

"Oh, *the wicked Tulip!*" Nelly softly exclaimed.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LAST FEATHER.

THERE was much sweetness at that time to temper the bitter of Janet's trial; yet when we recollect that though a just and honest man, utterly above fraud or chicanery, and steering his stubborn way as well as he knew how through the shoals of life, Mr. Browne had systematically indulged his daughters, and while sneering at any enthusiastic occupation for girls, had encouraged them both with purse and countenance in mere pleasure-seeking of an innocent kind, it would be in the last degree unjust to expect on her part any matured powers of endurance or self-control. Puzzled now between Mr. Lane and Bedford Lyte, and having a profound respect for the man whom she knew as Mr. Lane, almost independently of her love for him, and quite independently of what she had recently learned of Bedford Lyte, she took refuge from her difficulty in calling her lover "Sir." This was all arranged, of course, in her secret council-chamber, and there adding together her reasons to respect the two men, to love the former (Mr. Lane), and to pity the latter (Bedford Lyte), she achieved a splendid feminine ideal, and called it "Sir." There was something grotesquely interesting about this innocent and lovely girl. Those of our readers who follow up this brief chronicle to its close will be perhaps more interested in her and in her fate at its end than during its earlier stages, and will wish to know somewhat of her married life. But before long we shall find her, yielding to her own ungovernable impulses, in imminent risk of never reaching the connubial epoch.

It was evident enough that "Sir" had nev-

r loved any one but her. Having, as her most truthful father said, been tricked into marrying that wretched Eleanor, he could not now get rid of her. Janet well understood that a man of delicate feeling would not drag a woman from the seclusion of a cloister to undergo the exposure of a trial or divorce. "Well," she said to herself, "I can wait. I love him. I adore him. My noble, my generous, brave Sir. And he loves me. 'He was dazzled by my beauty!' Oh, how splendid! Who else *could* have said any thing so exquisite? I could *die* when I think of it. Oh! oh!" These ecstasies, which would have been pretty acting if entered in public, were merely Janet's secret everies.

But before long all the world was indignant with Walter Browne, Esquire, solicitor, of Pedlington; especially those gentlemen who had secured the reversions of the clerkships to the Justices of the Peace, to the Peddle Navigation Company, to the Turnpike Trust, to the County Lunatic Asylum, to the Peddlebourne Union, and to the Kent Conservative Superior Hop Cultivation Association, all of which Mr. Browne held, and continued to hold, though Death had knocked at his door with bony and importunate knuckles, and though (what was perhaps quite as important) Frank Browne had calmly stated that all the clerkships might go to some obscure region—for him.

But his relations were even more infuriated, his far-off cousins, and remote step-uncles and nephews, who had eaten the dolorous mutton at Dover, "the funeral-baked meats" of anticipation. After collecting round him all the paraphernalia of death, obsequies, as it were, in the pomp and canopy of coming dissolution, and actually giving a death-bed audience to his kith and kin, this old violator of conservative traditions had deliberately convalesced, and had gone back to his clerkships and emoluments at Pedlington just as if nothing had happened. Frank went so far as to inform Mr. Lyte, of Baliol College, Oxford, that a certain great London physician's watch had left off ticking, and was expected never to tick again, when its proprietor became aware of this recovery. Had Mr. Browne only remained deaf and dumb or blind (let us say), or imbecile and incapable, or paralytic in one side and a portion of the other, or given some such hostage to death and the doctors, his partial recovery would have been enurable. But for a man who had under-

taken to give up the ghost to retain it in this surreptitious manner was contrary to the good old usages of conservative society. Thus a Tory, however stanch, may outlive his own reputation. Mr. Walter Browne, hitherto unimpeachable, was now a renegade from the Tory ranks of respectable death in the command of a Tory doctor. His cousin, the surgeon at Farfield, called him "an old body-anatcher." The severe ecclesiastic dubbed him "a Lazarus." And even his own most gentle and loving wife fancied that he had outwitted and made fools of a large and most respectable body of people. But Frank, to his infinite credit, laughed all this nonsense to scorn, made fun individually and collectively of the whole tribe, and showed that some petty motive, which he ruthlessly exposed and derided, was at the bottom of this peevishness to which every one except honest Uncle Robert and their own little household had become a victim.

Mr. Browne's recovery might have achieved one benefit to his kith and kin. If they could only have combined and consorted for any purpose under the sun, they would now have done so, in the glow of their indignation, to abolish forever the foolish custom of clustering like vultures about a dying relative, taking up a sick man's hand and dropping it as if it were a hot potato, and then sneaking out of his presence like petty larcenists.

Whatever his remoter kindred might do or leave undone, all the family at Pedlington returned to their filial allegiance, and placed Bedford Lyte (the man whom they already loved, now in possession of a name which they had learned to dread) upon a pinnacle of love and esteem. The sad feature in the case was that now, for these five years, he never would come near them. Dr. Phelps, now one of Mr. Browne's favorites, had often visited him at Oxford, and had traveled with him in Europe. Captain Fuller, who had sensibly transferred his affections to Nelly, frequently visited Lyte at Oxford, and received him at Watermead. Frank visited him twice, at long intervals. Hubert twice at shorter intervals; but to Pedlington he never came. "He must have heard of the disease among the tulip bulbs in Kent," said Nelly. Suns set; moons waned. The former rose, the latter were restored again, as the poet observes. Then it all happened over again and again. At last the course of nature waxed exceedingly monotonous, and the social order flat, stale, and

unprofitable to Janet. She had no work to do, except those everlasting gloves and shirt buttons of Frank's, and certain pretty little needle tricks that will not occupy the heart or mind. She could not (after the manner of her kind) enjoy from time to time the innocent excitement of wondering, before a ball or picnic, about some possible lover, and regulating her own behavior (real or imaginary) toward the mysterious *inconnu*. Nor could she, as an honest girl, deliberately ogle, entrap, grab, strangle, and scrunch the bones of any unsuspecting lover, as a spider uses a fly, knowing all the time that she could award him no other treatment when caught. Novels were utterly vapid to her perceptions unless they portrayed a character like her "Sir," if they did so, it drove her mad to read them. And how could she live without love, now that love had so absorbed and swallowed up her former life that she could not remember it, and wondered how she had dragged on her existence from day to day and week to week without it? Yet not being any longer able to live without this elixir of life, how was the supply of it to be maintained within her? Would love continue to subsist on one little recollection, like the widow on her cruse of oil? Alas! alas! The cruet was already failing—had failed almost, and was well-nigh empty; so she thought. Her heart was heavy and weary within her, and sick with hope deferred and sore with vain regrets.

To see Nelly loving and loved, as she did daily now, really and steadfastly loved by a true and loyal man (though she had rejected him herself), was maddening. Now that Nelly had occupied that forlorn fortress, his heart, she was almost tempted to flirt with Captain Fuller from sheer mischief and a splenetic desire to inflict a wrong upon that obdurate "Sir" who left her to suffer beyond her power of endurance, to wait beyond her patience, to exhaust her fortitude, to sin, if she would, without a word of comfort, support, or counsel from his lips. And all for what? Some sullen ghost of barren honor, some verbal, perhaps legal, bond to one whom he never had and never could love. Oh, how she would like to get at that cruel woman, that Eleanor, and stab her to the heart!—drive the dagger home, as she had read in some old legend, till the haft struck against her ribs!

It is not too much to say that at times she was carried away by a passionate desire to

commit this crime, and thought herself in serious danger of yielding to the temptation and making that homicidal expedition to the quaint old Belgian city. But with regard to Bedford Lyte, she so longed and grew sick of vainly longing for him and his love that after two years of it she would assuredly have thrown patience to the winds, abandoned all conventional restraints, and gone to him, had she not too clearly foreseen how he would act. She would have gone to him and said, "Here I am, Sir. Here is your poor little Janet, to whom you gave a fortune, but whose heart you took away. Only let me stay and be near you always. Do not send me back, Sir."

Not only did she desire to do this foolish thing, but would actually have done it had she not seen, as in a vision, his calm relentless frown, more in sorrow than in anger, but still immovable even by her tears and cajoleries—had she not heard, as in a trance, his voice pronouncing her sentence of banishment, which would then have been irreversible. He would have taken her back, as cold and hard as a statue himself, and given her up to humiliation and despair. Yes, he would assuredly give her up and banish her forever on account of that ghost of barren honor, that legal fiction, which bound him to a woman who was *not* his wife. "For I am his true wife," she would aver to her own heart, "in virtue of this love that I bear to him." From this she would draw some comfort. "And does he not love me?" she would ask herself. "Am I not his own little girl, to whom he gave this splendid fortune, which I thought so little of before, so much now? He would not give it to any one else, only to me. Twelve thousand five hundred pounds! So much! why, the interest alone is four hundred and six pounds five shillings a year, and I have already saved five hundred pounds to give Nelly when she is married. He gave it to me. He loves me. I heard him say so. I heard. I was listening at the door." Then she repeated to herself those delicious words which she had overheard at the door of Frank's bedroom. That was her one luxury, poor little innocent. She had not even the green cotton umbrella now. But she had one little gift, only one. How she did treasure it! in what a system of bags it dwelt! First leather (*chamois*), then one of silk, then holland, double and wadded between, then velvet, embroidered and fringed and beaded, with the monogram S. J. worked upon it.

Frank had been spending a few days at Oxford with his friend. The days, few in number, were past, but not a word of Janet had been spoken, except in the first general inquiry about the health of "the young ladies." Since then every other member of the Browne family had, at one time or another, come on the *tapis* and been talked of, but Frank could see that Janet was a sealed book in the memory of Lyte. Just as they had seated themselves in the carriage which had been ordered to take the Adonis with his morocco bags and valises, his canes and his traveling wrappers, to the station, Frank said, in his usual indifferent drawl, "Oh, ah! by-the-way, Lyte, I forgot that *fleur d'Italie*. Could you drive me past a perfumer's? Janet wants a bottle of that new scent, and all the places in London will be closed when I pass through to-night."

At the words "Janet wants," something inside Bedford's waistcoat gave such a bound that a button nearly flew off. Before Frank had finished his argument, Mr. Lyte's head and shoulders were out of the window. In another minute the carriage stopped, and he sprang out, saying, "Sit still and take care of the traps. I won't be two minutes." In about that time they were again on the move.

"Oh yes. Thank you very much. How much was it?" Frank inquires.

"Never you mind," said Lyte, abruptly. "Give it her from me. Any one can give a lady a bottle of scent."

"But it isn't every one who can, and I never met another man who would, give a girl a nice fortune; though I have encountered two or three who would *take* one if they could get it, and put up with the girl to boot."

This was the first intimation which Lyte had received that the Brownes knew of his generosity in destroying his grandfather's will, although he had been informed of the change of feeling which Mr. Browne had expressed toward the once hated Bedford Lyte when the lawyer was supposed to be dying. He had feared that any such knowledge would distress them, and hoped it would never reach their ears. But Frank went on ruthlessly: "We all know of your noble-hearted generosity, my good fellow, and repent the cruel injustice we had formerly done you. But you will do me the justice to remember how heartily I wished Mr. Lane to marry Janet, and so recover the fortune I wanted to keep from Bedford Lyte."

"I shall not forget it in a hurry."

"And I need hardly tell you how I wish it could be so still. I can not give up hope. Surely you could get a divorce. Janet is the same, only more beautiful than ever. The men rave about her. But I don't want this feeling to consume her, Lyte. I care more for Janet than the money, though you may think me mercenary."

The murder was out now at the last moment.

"May you not be mistaken about her feeling?" asked Lyte, as the carriage was checked at the door of the station.

"No. She tells me a good deal, and I see more."

When Frank had consigned every thing except a favorite dressing-case to a porter, and taken his ticket, Lyte said, eagerly, "It must be starved out, Frank. She is young, and will yet form a strong, healthy regard for another man. It is impossible for me to drag that *poor creature* from the privacy of her convent, and parade her old shame and misery before the world. And if that were done, I could not marry. Only death can sever that bond. Give Janet that bottle of scent from yourself, and you can pay me when we meet again. The train is off now. Good-by."

Frank was borne away from his benefactor with a sore heart and a measure of anger in it. His regard for Lyte was sincere, but he growled at him as a Quixotic pedant, not being able to rise to the moral level which was the other man's natural atmosphere. That little bottle, however, was Janet's treasure. She had wheedled the secret out of Frank. "I love her, I love her," the dumb bottle seemed to say whenever she looked at it.

* * * * *

The four years of Lyte's Oxford career passed quickly enough with him, though not without constant effort, as time will pass to a man with manifold and absorbing interests. It must be a very different thing to be a young lady in a torpid country town. First and foremost stood his intellectual struggle, in which he was even more strenuously engaged than those who saw his exterior calm imagined to be the case. This could not and did not cure him of love, but was so exacting to his powers and satisfying to that love of conflict and excitement which rules within a strong man as to preclude all danger of love-sickness. Not that the possibility of love-sickness was abso-

lutely removed from Lyte's path, as he would have discovered in double-quick time had he yielded to intellectual languor. Often in those sad, silent, solitary night-watches, when the mind of a man strays from its nearer interests and goes back pitifully to those dearer ones which are as lost, the memory of Janet Browne, endued with that irresistible fascination which had mastered him in former days, came and stood before him in all its old power of beauty and sweetness. Sooth to say, at those times the strong man was nearly overcome. The vision would appear before him as the fair girl herself had done on a certain night in the little tea-room during her mother's evening party. Silently it always seemed to stand and appeal to him by its aspect. Yet did he never forget that her voice in speaking was low and sweet, like the breath of summer among dewy leaves. But with all his might he would put these visions away from him, and force his mind into its wonted groove, and urge it along with the power of his trained will, until these images were chased away from the retina of his imagination and the danger past. How different it was perforce with her!

Then, in addition to his studies, and in wholesome relief of the strain upon his mental faculties, Bedford Lyte had his boating, swimming, and running to occupy much time and attention, to call into action and expend much superfluous energy, and afford a useful vent for the enthusiasm of his disposition. Being a large and powerful man as well as a skillful oarsman, he rowed for the first year as No. 4 in his college eight-oared boat, which gained several places on the river during the college races. The next year he was picked out of his own boat on account of his splendid style and great strength to row No. 4 in the second university boat, which was preparing to supplement any gaps in the first boat, then training for the great race with Cambridge. At first he declined this honor, but, being pressed, acceded to the wishes of his friends merely to assist in perfecting the second or subsidiary boat. At the same time he positively asserted that in no case would he join the racing crew. After about four weeks of training, however, he found his mind rather invigorated than exhausted by the severe physical exercise and the enforced regular hours, and having measured out his beek work, and found that he could do as much as before, ceded that point. The No. 4 orig-

inally chosen for the first boat, a man his equal in style and strength, but younger and less vigorous in constitution, began to spit blood, as is often the case under a too severe trial of the powers of endurance. So Bedford Lyte went into the racing crew, and rowed in two successive years in the great university race on the Thames.

Being thus continually in good bodily condition, his college mates, who were proud of their champion, urged him to enter for the university athletic sports, in which he more than once gained distinction for himself and them. The training necessary for these exploits, which occasionally proves too severe for a minor, whose vital energy may not be equal to his muscular strength, was really of permanent service to Lyte both intellectually and physically. It obliged him to abandon that pernicious habit of working at night into which he had fallen, and habituated him to a simple regular dietetic system, besides endowing him with a hearty and unfailing appetite. All these things are inimical to any excesses of a fertile imagination.

But we should hardly have entered so fully into these retrospective details were it not that these distinctions, even more perhaps than the academical honors gained by her hero, brought the name of Bedford Lyte in all its glory so continually before Janet as to keep her in a kind of intermittent fever of enthusiasm and suspense. For weeks before a university boat-race she would wear nothing but Oxford blue. Before the great event came off she could have laid violent hands on any person who sported the paler (Cambridge) hue. After each of her hero's victories she would subside into a week's delicious serenity, and take to her bosom any acquaintance who had been interested in the losing boat. She made Frank subscribe to the *Oxford Chronicle*, from which paper and from the *Times* she would cut out every paragraph which chronicled the name and achievements of her lover. Though terribly jealous of all these pursuits, which she was shrewd enough to perceive must keep his faculties pretty well occupied without hankering after her, yet she gloried in his triumphs a thousand times more than if they had been her own, and would go and sit with poor old Graves (who was failing fast, having received his death-blow from the opening and consecration of the Pedlington Cemetery), to whom she would explain as well as she could the meaning of

all, and upon whom she bestowed enough tobacco to last him for another threescore years and ten.

"I can't make it out nohow," Tobias would say, when his bewildering little visitor had taken herself off. "She carries on as if master had given up his learning and turned waterman. And this 'ere baccy ain't like what master's baccy was. Times is sadly altered."

But for Janet, whatever "Sir" did was glorious and splendid in her eyes, though the doing it might weaken her hold upon his memory. She literally despised all other men in her mental comparison of them with him, and believed him to be the most profound scholar and peerless Paladin who ever dazzled a benighted world. Moreover—and this was the most delicious assurance of all—she knew that if he was, in his romantic sense of honor, depriving her even of his friendship and fraternal regard, it was not because any other girl had fascinated or could fascinate him. Of this she was absolutely certain. He only kept away because her spell upon him was *too* potent, because he was afraid of loving her "not wisely, but too well."

Before every long vacation and every Christmas vacation went forth a kind and friendly invitation from the Brownes of Pedlington to the Oxford student. Yet he never came. Frank went to him twice during those four years, Hubert went to him twice, and each brought back little crumbs of comfort for Janet. She had formed quite an attachment for Dr. Phelps, too, and that genius contrived to impart some morsels of gratification and relief to her weary spirit. Just after passing his Sandhurst examination and being gazetted to a regiment, Bertie had rushed up to Oxford, brimful of his good news. Not finding Mr. Lane (as he still called his old friend) in his sitting-room, he burst into the bedroom, where it so happened that the triptych under the crucifix was open, and arrested his attention. The skulls, the pickled stomach, and the preserved brain were gone, and a very beautiful picture had usurped their place. This painting *malgré lui* arrested his attention, and he stood before it transfixed with admiration and astonishment and delight. His host surprised him before it. Ingenuously blushing, Hubert apologized for being in the bedroom, and explained.

"What do you think of it?" asked Bedford.

"Exact! wonderful!" exclaimed Hubert.

"Why, my dear boy, it's the Blessed Virgin!"

"Oh!" cried the youthful warrior, perplexed. But on his return to Pedlington he told Janet what he had seen, swore it was a likeness of her, pure and simple. "And flatters you most divinely," he added.

Janet was in ecstasies. "Where did he get it? Who did it? What a duck the artist must be! When could he have seen me? But is it really like?"

"To answer a few dozen of your questions in a bunch," Bertie rejoined: "the artist never saw *you*, but conceived the idea literally—so Mr. Lane assured me—and painted head and hair and all that while it was fresh in his mind's eye, intending to fill in the accessories and sell it to a monastery as a picture of the Virgin Mary. But Mr. Lane saw it on his easel (in Dresden, I think it was) and bought it. And a pretty sum he gave for it, I expect."

Mr. Browne, who had almost entirely recovered his own vigor, entertained an increasing respect for the young man whom he had once abhorred, thinking it both wise and generous of him to persist in refusing the invitations which he still thought proper to have sent twice each year without fail. To one Lyte would write and say he was in rigid training for some Corinthian games, and would be executed by lynch-law if he dared to move from Oxford; to another that only the day before its receipt he had engaged to go on the Continent with a friend, or on a walking tour in Wales, or somewhere, and with some purpose incompatible with a visit to Kent.

All this time, however, Eleanor Bailey, as they still called her in their secret conclave, was alive, and it was therefore right and honorable on the part of her unfortunate husband to keep away from another young lady whose charms had already proved too much for him. But by a strange and, as it at first seemed to Janet, by a providential coincidence, in the very week after Bedford's final examination at Oxford, while he and all his friends were waiting in breathless suspense for the *lists* to be issued and his academical fate made known, news of Eleanor Bailey's death in the nunnery in Belgium came to Pedlington. Mr. Browne would have concealed it a while, but Miss Lyte wrote to Janet and told her with a crow of delight. Then the class lists appeared, and Bedford Lyte was *facile princeps*,

the Senior Classic of his year, thus verifying Martin's ancient avowal that "Mr. Lane" was "no end of a scholar." That young gentleman, who had faithfully adhered to his old master, and made fair progress in the face of his difficulties, was enrolled among the third class in classical honors.

Janet was in a flutter of expectation. Would he come at last? Not Martin. She knew too well that Martin would come. He still worshiped the boards on which she capered with "the light fantastic toe;" for Janet had continued to appear at balls, though with a somewhat forlorn and Lenten aspect. Martin came, flushed with his virgin honors, to lay them at her feet, but "Sir" neither came nor wrote. "They'll give him a fellowship now, you know. They want to have him for classical lecturer," said Martin. Janet stamped and blushed and frowned. She wouldn't take the heir of Plumstead Manor, with his third class. She wanted the Senior Classic, and the biggest man in the university boat. But "those horrid old frumps" *did* make Mr. Lyte a fellow, and offered him the lectureship, which he declined, and went incontinently off to Mexico as a war correspondent. This was the climax of Janet's woe, the last feather which broke the camel's back.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MAN OVERBOARD.

Now the biggest man in the victorious Oxford University boat raged and fretted in his diminutive cabin, smoking many pipes in supreme defiance of Captain M'Leod, and reading this horrid letter of Frank's by his surreptitious lamp, until it drove him wild. Not a word had he written to or heard from the Brownes during his year's exile in America. Poor Martin, in the innocence of his unsuspecting heart, and glowing with delight at some little favor which Janet in her weariness had extended to him, had said to his old tutor, during their last term at Oxford, words which had induced the latter to think she had tacitly accepted his younger rival. And it must be remembered that he had done his utmost to destroy her regard for him. So when the news of Eleanor's death reached him, it only affected him with a tender and most charitable melancholy. Of Janet and Martin he fervently ejaculated, "God speed them both!" and went on his dreary way to a country

where he knew that life was cheaply held; for on proposing to insure his own at a first-rate office, it had been courteously declined, "the risks in Mexico at the present crisis, and under the present state of affairs, being so manifold." Nevertheless the seductive secretary hoped they should see him back safe and sound, and that he would wish to renew his proposition after having evaded the dangers of war in such a savage and unhealthy region.

It was the trifling episode of his conversation with Martin which induced him so suddenly to accept this engagement, and to maintain for so long an unbroken silence with his friends in Pedlington. He honestly wished Janet to be free to make and retain her own choice, and feared that any thing approaching to an advance on his part, now that he was free, would seem like claiming her on the score of his generosity and of the previous love passage between them.

But when the stormy year of his campaigning was drawing to a close, he wrote to Frank from Mexico, announcing his return by way of Vera Cruz and New York, and casually remarking that he supposed he should have to congratulate Janet and Martin on his arrival. The letter in his hand was a brief answer from Frank, received through his agents in New York, saying how glad they all had been to see his handwriting again, how much more glad they would be to see his face, and expressing astonishment that he had not written before leaving England, or for so many months since. As to the bit of *badinage* about Martin and Janet (Frank said), of course she could not help poor Martin's persistent folly. But they all liked him well enough, and thought he was really enamored of some poetical ideal, and had chosen Janet to impersonate this. Alas! how often is this indeed the case! Frank proceeded to say that ever since Lyte's articles had appeared in the — *Review*, that periodical had entirely supplanted the Oxford *Chronicle*, and the whole family had grown quite learned in the geography and current military and political history of "The Latin Empire." Then in a postscript Frank added: "The sooner you turn up, my dear fellow, the better. A certain person, who has now arrived at years of discretion, is becoming rather more cracked than discreet; and I really don't know what may not happen if the state of suspense is protracted. She says now that she knows you

won't come home, but will stay in New York. I wonder whether you will have stumbled across your old enemy George Baily at New York. Probably not. But it seems he has fallen upon his legs in the United States; and though he is a degraded man now, I must do him the justice to say that he has scraped together and returned the £500 put by for Hubert, of which he had (to the best of our belief) defrauded the governor. He has had the impudence to write to Blanche and ask her to join him out there. We all oppose the idea; but there is no knowing what a woman may not do in such a case. I suppose you do not know that Nelly is to be married to Fuller on the 1st of February, and that they sail for Canada about a week after the wedding."

It is hardly necessary to say that while the paragraph in the body of the letter which repudiated any idea of Martin's success would by itself have been a source of delight to our returning exile, that passage in the *postscript* alarmed and agitated him. Why was not Frank more explicit? What could he mean? One thing was evident now beyond a doubt. Janet had been constant to him, even under the cruel blow of his departure without a word of encouragement spoken or written, after she had heard of his freedom. But now, at length, Frank feared something from the protraction of her suspense. He was not a man to speak prematurely. What was it that he feared? Was she, in anger or despair, about to throw herself away upon some man whom she did not love? Or was her health giving way under the strain?

Well Lyte remembered that two or three years previously Frank had hinted that this passion was "consuming her." It was during the short conversation which arose between them *apropos* of the bottle of perfume. But in the long interval which had elapsed since then he had persistently tried to starve out that regard of hers, not anticipating his own freedom, and since knowing of his own release had pursued his former plan in order to leave her free. But now it appeared that she had never wavered, and was suffering past endurance from his seeming inconstancy. Oh, if she could only read his true heart, and see how she was cherished there! Surely, Bedford Lyte insisted to himself, as some millions of lovers have done before, no woman was ever so singly and purely worshiped as she had been in that secret shrine. Nor was he very far wrong. The man had loved

the girl with more devotion than many girls have lavished upon them in this degenerate age. He had proved it, too; though after a fashion little likely to have yielded her much comfort hitherto.

Should he find her thin and wasted, with her beauty half gone, her radiance dimmed? Almost he hoped it might be so, that he might prove how far above such mortal chances was his mature love for her. He thought of Osseo, and Owenee the faithful, and declared solemnly to himself that if his Janet had become "wrinkled, old, and ugly," as did Owenee, he would still be true, as Osseo was; and doubtless he would have been so. There are some men who *can* only love once, though as boys they might have slipped, as Lyte had done. Yet had he possessed twelve millions of gold doubloons instead of £1200 (to which sum his little savings amounted), he would have given every fraction of it, without a murmur, to save her beauty—so far in his eyes was it beyond every source of actual or possible delight which he had ever known.

As he fumed and fretted, the sea rose higher, and the wind raged more fiercely in fitful and sudden gusts. Every half hour the mate had been shortening sail during the last watch. It was now four o'clock in the morning, and blowing a strong gale. The ship, no longer steady and upright, at times careened over to leeward, then righting again with a heavy lurch, appeared to suffer a strain through her whole body, as though the knees and joists were parting company, and the ocean about to pour in and engulf them.

As eight bells struck, the mate thundered at the captain's door. That mariner enjoyed profound slumbers under the most agitating circumstances, and had already confided to Mr. Lyte that he could sleep "till the crack of doom," if he only once got "soundly off in a gale of wind."

Being aware of this idiosyncrasy on the part of his commander, Mr. Jones (a small but sturdy mariner) pounded away, regardless alike of knuckles and panels.

"What now?" roared the captain from within.

"Blowin' a gale, Sir," bellowed the officer.

"Have you made her snug?" (from within).

"Ay, ay, Sir."

"How's her head?"

"East-node-east" (in Mr. Jones's stentorian conventional).

"How's the wind?" (from within).

"No-ode" (still more stentorian and conventional).

"Then let it blow!" (from within).

This dialogue, rude, and almost horrible as it may seem, in the face of danger impending over the lives of so many persons who were innocent of the craft and avarice which had actuated the owners, rather inspired the passenger with confidence in the captain. Evidently, even when half drunk and half asleep, he could follow up an idea through its legitimate stages, and form a conclusion which, though rash, was based upon the satisfactory evolution of that idea.

But Mr. Jones was equally worthy of respect, and, moreover, was sober. After a pause, during which the plunging and lurching of the ship indicated great difficulty in steering her on the present course, he again thundered at the captain's door.

"What now-ow-ow?" roared the angry commander.

"Blowin' terrible hard, Sir," bellowed the mate.

"So it was last time you came kickin' up a row here," retorted the captain, who supposed he had been asleep for a whole watch (four hours) since the last disturbance. "How's her head?" he continued, yawning terribly.

"East-node-east," as before.

"How's the wind?"

"No-o-ode!" louder than Boreas itself.

"Then let it blow, and—et cætera," dimly audible.

"We'd better heave her to, Sir," roared Mr. Jones.

At this outrageous breach of discipline, Captain M'Leod, looking like the pictures of sanguinary buccaneers in boys' books, with a fiery visage surrounded with fierce black hair, with glaring eyes and glistening teeth, appeared suddenly at his door in a white guernsey and woolen drawers.

"Pray who commands this ship, Sir?" he inquired, gravely.

"Why, you do, Sir," replied the mate, uncovering.

"And you've made her snug, using your own judgment, Mr. Jones? and you tell me the wind is north, and the ship steering her course? That is so, is it not?"

"That's so, Sir."

"Then let the ship continue on her course; and tell the officer of the watch, if any thing is carried away, to clap it on again."

Before Mr. Jones had securely fastened on his sou'wester again, a snort like the battle-

cry of a wild boar, from the recesses of the stern cabin, announced that Captain M'Leod, of the *Adriatic*, was again in the embrace of the drowsy god. Then Lyte heard the discomfited mate growling like a grizzly bear, and blundering up the steps which led from the cuddy to the poop deck, and, when he got there, uniting with the second mate (whose watch it was) in new orders for reducing the amount of sail. Not being able to sleep, Lyte went up also. The night seemed to be pitch-dark, and by the mysterious light of the binnacle lamp the men at the wheel looked like two Brobdignagians. Presently the mate came aft, and stooped over the binnacle to see the compass. He looked like Magog, and the other two like Og and Gog. The wind yelled and shrieked through the rigging. The cries of the men taking up a third reef in the maintop-sail sounded like the inarticulate howling of lost spirits sent to wander on the trackless deep. Every now and then, as the ship surged up the side of a soaring wave, or plunged into some tremendous ocean hollow, a white gleam of surf skimmed up or down the heaving mass, merely serving to make the darkness visible; and when the passenger struggled and grappled his way to the forward part of the poop, he could distinguish, partly by sight and partly by sound, and the huge vibrations of the ship, that the crest of every wave, itself an immense body of water, was curling over the weather bulwark, and seething to and fro on the main-deck, always being replenished by another before it could escape at the lee scuppers. After a while, a rift in the clouds allowing a faint glimmer of starlight to appear, Lyte saw the sailors gliding mysteriously, like hobgoblins, down the main rigging, and apparently dropping recklessly into the turbid pool on deck. But really no human being unaided could have got through it, and ropes were strained along from poop to fore-castle, by which the descent and transit either way were made.

Finding after a while that the officer of the watch was clutching hold of something and hanging on beside him, Lyte shouted at him, "Rough-and-tumble kind of work this!" which intellectual remark he had to bellow at the top of his voice about half a dozen times, the officer seeming most anxious to hear it, but unable to do so at first on account of the whizzing and roaring of wind and waves, and the manifold noises of a ship straining in distress.

"We shall ketch it—afore long," was the cheerful reply, which the passenger caught at once, either from the seaman's more judicious selection of time or of his words. After which encouragement, at the imminent risk of his life, Mr. Lyte regained the companion ladder, and blundered back to his little cabin, where he found Tommy still balancing himself on one leg, and with his head still tucked under his wing, as if the ship were upright and motionless in a harbor of refuge.

This sort of thing continued not only without abatement, but rather getting worse and worse, during the morning watch and the whole of the next day, the standing rigging and the bulwarks creaking and grinding in a most detestable regularity of dissonance as the vessel scudded and lurched through a heavy cross-sea. The main-deck was constantly afloat, and though as yet happily the cuddy and state-rooms (in the poop) were high and dry, it is scarcely pleasant to be in mid-Atlantic, in the howling month of February, on board of a ship whose decks and bulwarks form a tank which holds a gurgling, seething pool, ever changing its course, rushing to and fro, hither and thither, with the pitching and rolling of the ship, and dashing with mimic fury of the war without against every obstacle which opposes its movements. Bedford's bones ached worse than they did after rowing either of his two university races, or after running his victorious two-mile race against the champions of Cambridge, London, Dublin, and Durham, in which he gained for himself and his college undying renown. Why, it was publicly stated, after due reference to *Bell's Life* and *The Field*, that the time in which Lyte accomplished the two miles was fully one-fifth of a second less than in any race on record! The Durham man was beaten by one second and a fifth; the London man by one and two-fifths; the others were nowhere. So terrific had the pace been from start to finish that all the quidnuncs present anticipated a breakdown on the part of Lyte.

Now the hero's running days seemed to have run themselves out. Browbeaten and dejected in aspect, after two or three hopeless and helpless scrambles and tumblings on to the poop and down again, he sat humbly over a novel at the cuddy table, having coaxed the steward for a gravitating lamp, grasping the rack with tenacious digits, entwining his noble legs in the lashings under-

neath, and barely managing to hold his own, so fickle is human glory!

Captain M'Leod had been restored to a sense of duty at eight o'clock in the morning, when the officer of the ensuing watch again politely suggested heaving to. She was too deep in the *waarter*, he said, being from Somersetshire. She did lurch terrible, and the mastiseses wer' in danger, he added.

"Then let her *go off* two points, Mr. Fitzgerald," roared the resolute captain. "Give her the foresail (with a reef in it), and then let her *rip*! Now remember, Mr. Crays—you and your men—her course is due east."

Mr. Crays, in a roar like a savage bear, responded, "Ay, ay, Sir!"

"And you, Mr. Fitz, if she carries any thing away, you clap it on again. And if the wind shifts (which it won't), let me know." And down the mariner stumbled, bestowing upon his sore and studious guest at the cuddy table a sounding smack between the shoulder-blades, inviting him to "keep up his pecker," and, to Bedford's delight (somewhat tempered with apprehension), announcing his determination to "let her rip," i. e., to proceed on her course at all hazards, when more prudent navigators would heave to.

The gale was now blowing steadily from the northwest, and the vessel being steered due east, went more freely with the wind on her quarter. She was running under treble-reefed foretop and maintop sails, a reefed foresail, and a foretop-mast stay-sail. At intervals of two hours, and sometimes less, Captain M'Leod appeared on the poop, with a countenance like "furious Goth" or "fiery Hun," stared savagely at the elements, at the two unfortunates who were steering the stubborn ship, and at the officer of the watch, after which silent protest against nature and art he would disappear. "Stick-ing to your seat like grim death, eh, Mr. Lyte?" he would say, while passing that unhappy individual at the cuddy table. At last he dragged Lyte into his stern cabin, and fed him on Bologna sausage, Bourbon whiskey, and Angostura bitters. Cooked meals were out of the question. The cook's galley was an island in the middle of a whirlpool, and that sable functionary himself enjoying sweet sleep and balmy oblivion in the regions below. Nevertheless the steward promised Mr. Lyte a cup of tea in the evening, if he could "only get a bit of fire in the cuddy stove." Alas! they knew not what the evening would bring forth.

The afternoon brought forth not more, perhaps, than was dimly foreboded, but certainly more than was distinctly foreseen. At 2 P.M., while his guest was, at the captain's request, "pitching into" a Bologna sausage, and the good ship *Adriatic* was pitching into the waves with an apparent intention of never coming out again, a tremendous *bang* and a *smash* were distinctly audible in the stern cabin, though the wind was carrying sounds forward.

"Hullo!" observed Lyte, pausing with sausage in air.

Bang! Smash! For a few moments the two reports seemed to hush all the previous grinding, grating, creaking, and groaning of casks, barrels, ropes, and timbers which proclaimed the general distress.

"There they go!" rejoined M'Leod, in a sort of oracular response to Lyte's "Hullo!"

Presently a large amphibious boatswain, clad in yellow tarpaulin, and dripping with Atlantic brine, appeared in the doorway.

Grinning hideously, he blurts out, "Fo'es'l carried away, Sir."

"And?" the captain inquired, being fully aware that as yet only the *bang* was accounted for.

"And main-deck swept clean as a whistle. Cook's galley, bulwarks, water casks, barrel, spare spars, and all, clean gone!"

"Pipe all hands to grog, aft, immediately. Tell Mr. Fitzgerald to set the main try-sail, and then set to work and bend a new storm foresail."

"Ay, ay, Sir;" and away went the amphibious one.

Lyte made it a point of honor to ask no further questions. And though M'Leod when drinking freely was not usually communicative, yet being touched by this consideration on the part of his guest, he spoke out. "It must be one of two things," he said: "we must keep on moving pretty fast, and take care *not to get pooped*, or we must heave to. If I heave to, the ship won't ride. She's too deep, as Mr. Green says. I doubt if we could keep her up to the wind."

"What is being pooped?" asked the landsman, innocently.

"If they don't get that try-sail set, and bend another foresail, you'll see before long. Only then you'll never be able to tell the tale. You see, we're pretty nearly running before the wind. If one of these big rollers comes along faster than we keep moving, it smashes in our poop, and down we go stern foremost."

At this juncture the howling of the brave fellows was heard in midship. They had swallowed their rum, and were setting the try-sail—a service of danger, now that the main-deck was swept clear of her bulwarks, and was open to the fury of every roller through the summit of which they rushed, and whose foaming crest closed in upon them, as if it were claiming them for its own.

Among brave men in danger a sort of freemasonry exists, as undoubtedly is the case also among cowards. M'Leod had strongly taken to his new ally, and had persuaded him to light his trusty old pipe and smoke it in his own sacred cabin.

At 3.45 P.M. another crash, loud though distant, was heard.

"The foretop-mast, by——!" exclaimed the captain, now springing to his feet and hurrying up on deck. Lyte followed at once. This was a twofold disaster, the foretop-sail and foretop-mast stay-sail both coming down together, depriving the ship of all sail forward, and encumbering her with the wreck. Of course it had been impossible in this stress of weather to bend a new foresail since the former one was carried away, so that now the ship was scudding under only the reefed maintop-sail and the main try-sail, and it was almost as difficult to keep her before the wind as to heave her to.

All hands were immediately summoned, and the wreck cleared away as rapidly as possible under the circumstances. Lyte, seeing a service toward in which he could be of use, scrambled down for his bowie-knife, went along the ropes to the fore rigging, and there worked manfully at cutting away the wreck, though he narrowly escaped being washed overboard more than once, and only owed his life to his own agility and tenacity of grasp.

No sooner was all the topmast rigging cleared away than the forestay-sail was set, and incredible exertions were made by all hands to bend a new foresail. The moon came to the rescue, and though the ship was terribly knocked about and the steering apparatus much strained in the mean while, they had the new foresail set before midnight. Then the captain, at urgent request of the officers (for which Mr. Lyte silently cursed them), hove the ship to, and turned in.

By some obscure mental process it was evident to Lyte that whereas officers and

men all liked their captain, all equally dis-trusted him. The overlading of the vessel, in which M'Leod had no concern, was now acknowledged on all hands; and though Lyte saw that the man upon whom now chiefly all their lives depended was a drunkard, he also saw that there was a vast reserve of energy about him, drunk or sober, and that he was capable of judicious and energetic action if this could be called into operation at the right moment. Putting together M'Leod's age (about fifty), his robust health, his position, and reputation, it was clear that he could not habitually have indulged too freely while in command of a ship. In all probability the overlading of the vessel had preyed upon his mind in the present instance, and co-operated with other causes of anxiety, to which he had already alluded in conversation with his guest, to cause the present most inopportune outbreak. Consoling himself as well as he could in this way, and with the reflection that the officers were able and willing, Lyte once more "turned in," and while doing so stroked and coaxed his drowsy little bird, which opened one eye and peeped at him curiously; for he was weighed upon with a kind of apprehension that this would be their last greeting. The small bird manifested a power of sleeping, and a dexterity in poisoning himself on one leg with his head invisible, which were provoking. It seemed to imply that in causing his master to lose a passage on the finest steamer afloat, and to intrust himself on a ship which exhibited the strongest possible tendency to go to the bottom, he had fulfilled his terrestrial destiny, and had no more functions to perform than becoming an insensate ball of fluff, and maintaining his equilibrium by night and day with a sublime disregard to the laws of gravitation.

Again M'Leod emulated his passenger and bird in the profundity of his slumbers and in his practical defiance of certain sound theoretical maxims. To Bedford Lyte, in those anxious sleepless hours, that versatile ship *Adriatic*, large as she was, seemed to achieve every variety of position except the inverted vertical. To say that occasionally he ascertained his heels to be where a man naturally looks for his head would fall ludicrously short of the actual state of the case. After a couple of hours' violent straining and struggling to maintain a horizontal position commensurate with

the limits of his berth, he gave that up, as men have given up trying to square the circle. Jamming himself into a corner to leeward in such a posture that nothing short of an absolute somersault on the part of the *Adriatic* could dislodge him, he recommenced the perusal of his novel by the light of a gravitating lamp. Fortunately for him, it was the inimitable *Tale of Two Cities*, by Charles Dickens; and the capers cut by his berth served as a ludicrous illustration of the lively coffin which hopped, skipped, and jumped along in pursuit of the fugitive and terrified son of Jerry.

Thus the wearisome night-watches wore away far less tediously than they might have done had the modern delineator of humanity never lived and wrought. Already the first glimmer of wintry dawn was peering through the scuttle, and paling the twinkle of his dying lamp as the ship rolled to starboard—when suddenly the *Adriatic* was convulsed from bow to stern-post, from mast-head to keel, by a prodigious shock. Lyte had scarcely time to notice that she swerved and staggered in a manner quite different to all her former evolutions, when the ocean rushed in upon him in a drenching, blinding flood. Whence it came he knew not; but what mattered that? One thing he knew beyond a doubt: his frail door had flown open under the pressure, and it was surging in his little cabin and out again breast-high.

In this horrible predicament he yet formed and carried out one idea. That the ship was foundering he hastily took for granted, and though a powerful swimmer, he knew that a man unaided can not live long in a heavy sea. He therefore slipped off his pilot coat, dropped it in the pool in which he stood, dragged out his cork jacket from under his holster and put it on, then floundered and scrambled up on to the poop deck, only observing as he went that the water seemed to be leaving the cuddy faster than it came in.

The captain was already on deck, and pounced upon him instantly. The steering apparatus of the vessel had given way, from the tremendous strain upon it; she had suddenly *broaded to*, and had fallen into the trough of the sea, where she lay almost on her beam ends, and exposed to the full fury of the waves, which now beat even over the lofty poop. One of these waves had burst open Bedford's cabin scuttle, and had poured an angry stream of water upon him as he

sat pent up against the lee bulk-head. Another had burst open the cuddy doors and sent a tremendous volume of water surging up and down the whole length of the saloon. Meanwhile the two gallant fellows at the wheel, and Mr. Green, the second mate, had been washed overboard and were irretrievably lost; and when M'Leod reached the deck he found himself alone on the poop of a foundering ship.

Now suddenly, to his great joy, having a strong and willing man at his elbow, Captain M'Leod snatched a favorable opportunity and seated Lyte on his buttocks with a coil of the tiller chain twisted round his left wrist, and grasped below with both hands about fourteen inches from the block, and implored him for God's sake, and as he valued all their lives, not to let go till he came back.

Then M'Leod vanished; and before we attempt to indicate Bedford Lyte's fate we may as well say that the captain's enterprise was to dare the perils of the main-deck, and trust to the strength and courage of his passenger to keep a little control of the rudder until he could bring the carpenter aft, and two or three more men, to relieve Lyte from his awful position and resume the steering of the disabled vessel.

The difficulty and perplexity of Lyte's situation are wholly past the comprehension of a landsman. There he sat, sternly tugging and straining at that awful chain, for some long, long minutes, which hung

"Like Joshua's moon in Ajalon."

Great masses of water, breaking over the ship's counter, hurled themselves upon him, drenching him to the skin, blinding his eyes, which he was wholly unable to wipe, and gradually freezing the very strength out of his hands and wrists, to which the cold, slippery chain now clung with a deadly coil. His back, or, rather, only the lower part of it, was planted against a projection not high enough to afford him a fair fulcrum; his feet against the still lower and rounded staple which held the block through which the chain would have run had he abandoned it. Had he done so, the vessel would again have been at the mercy of the ruthless elements, and would in all probability have been sunk in less than a minute. Of this he had a vague but positive apprehension.

Every muscle of his powerful frame was strained to the utmost. The invincible will

which had triumphed over so many obstacles, moral and physical, was set more firmly than his sinews. Appreciating blindly the value of the tremendous charge intrusted to him, he had resolved, if need be, to allow his hands and wrists to be dragged into the block, and so to check the outgoing of the chain at the price of a horrible and most painful death. A momentary pang on behalf of the poor little bird which had involved him in this fate pierced his heart. Then came with lightning rapidity a perception that this death was the result of having preferred his birds and his stubborn solitude to a frank confession of his early fault, and that happy though perhaps humiliating confidence which he might have enjoyed with Henry Phelps, if he would only have ventured on that confession. How much had that stupid false pride cost him! And the fault, after all, had been so lightly forgiven. These regrets plunged swift, keen arrows, as it were, into his mind and heart. Then followed a smaller though at the moment a still more cruel pang, that he was not now so placed as to bring all his immense strength into active operation. He thought of the Herculean efforts which he had made at the critical moments in the great struggle between Oxford and Cambridge, and forgot that instead of pulling an oar in a wager boat he was now saving a three-thousand-ton ship from destruction. He almost cried aloud in his agony: "I could have pulled the chain six inches further out—further out—in spite of these cruel jerks, if I only had a—a—purchase. But now— Oh! I am going. Janet! Janet!"

One of those cruel jerks, the furious action of the sea on the loosened rudder, communicated by the tiller to the chain which he was holding, was just dragging his hands into the hateful block, when a sudden relief, which drew the chain a few inches out again, released him.

"Let go! let go!" shouted a stentorian voice above him. "Let go!" It was Mr. Crays, the taciturn third mate, who, gathering from the captain's orders to the carpenter in what position the passenger was left, had snatched up a huge iron hook and hastened along the ropes which connected the fore-castle with the poop, and had caught a link of the chain between Lyte's hands and the block. The iron hook, which was now inserted in the link, was sufficient to secure the chain from being drawn further out; and now the carpenter arrived, with the car-

tain, bringing a lighted lantern and some necessary implements, and when Lyte had cleared his eyes of the salt-water, he was able to assist them in temporarily refitting the tiller and helm.

Alas! the two helmsmen and the sturdy second mate could never be restored to their footing on deck. But the case was too critical with the living to bestow many vain regrets on the dead. The rudder was itself loose. There was not sufficient daylight as yet for them to form an idea how loose. Of the four swivels by which the rudder is connected with the stern-post, one, two, three, or all four might be loosened or injured in some way. But it was absolutely necessary to bring the ship to the wind and heave to again; for the foresail, the forestay-sail, the maintop-sail, and main try-sail had all been blown to ribbons, and it would be dangerous beyond measure to attempt scudding under bare poles. So they lashed up some hammocks in the fore rigging, put the helm up, and brought her head to the wind again, and then set seriously about considering and repairing, if possible, the injury already received.

CHAPTER XXV.

TOBIAS DIGS HIS LAST GRAVE.

BEFORE noon on the eventful day which dawned amidst the perils of our last chapter, the crew of the *Adriatic*, now short of three brave hearts and three pairs of willing hands, had managed by superhuman efforts to bend a new maintop-sail and a new foresail in place of those which had been carried away by the wind when the vessel broached to and swung helplessly round under that furious assault of the elements. Again the good ship, now crippled and tottering like a wounded man, was put before the wind. The sea still swept onward in gigantic foam-crested rollers, which stretched from north to south as far as the eye could reach. But now again the sun shone propitiously, and the wind, though too strong for a disabled ship, was fair. Again they were steering due east, and careering through the mighty billows at racing speed.

"Why does she lean over so horribly to the right?" Bedford innocently asked the captain, with whom he was breakfasting in camp fashion on Bourbon whisky and Bologna sausage, having in prospect a dinner of "Bologna sausage and Bourbon whisky

—for a change," as M'Leod facetiously expressed it.

That mariner regarded his guest with some amusement, not unmixed with admiration. After obliging him to repeat the question, he replied, with a sly twinkle of his keen black eye, "Well, you see, Mr. Lyte, she's got a list to starboard."

"Oh!" responded the landsman. "Ah! Indeed!" And as he munched valiantly at the meats of Bologna (commonly at sea called "Polonies") he murmured to himself, "She's got a list to starboard, has she?" and wisely resolved to use his eyes instead of his tongue for further elucidation of this mystery. It seemed to him as if the vessel were bewitched. As long as she was hove to on the port tack there was some reason for her leaning over, though even then the angle of her masts with the plane of the horizon was rather too small; but now that she was scudding freely before a strong fair wind, there was something awful in the persistent way in which she canted over, and at times he really thought she must topple over on to her beam ends, and heartily wished she had pitched her main and mizzen topmasts overboard after the foretop-mast, as she would then have had less weight to overbalance her.

The steering apparatus was also a source of anxiety which would last as long as the voyage. This the captain spoke of with unreserved gloom, all the more freely because Lyte abstained from asking him a question on the subject, and because he had rendered such signal service connected with it in the crisis of their danger. He spoke of it plainly as "a bad job," and one that could not be remedied at sea more than it had been, because the mischief was under water. The breaking of the chain, of course, had been easily repaired, but no one could reach the bolts and swivels many feet under water at the stern-post of a moving ship. The elements had become propitious and the gale in part abated since that burst of its fury. "And if it hadn't," M'Leod added, "we might as well have abated our efforts; for all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't have put Humpty Dumpty on the wall again." This was his jocular way of intimating their danger. Nor was he at all careless (as Lyte fancied) about the "list to starboard." But knowing that all his men were tired out, he had sent as many as could be spared below to eat and sleep.

Early in the afternoon the serious work

began, the watches having been reorganized to divide the deficiency of the three missing men, and one watch sent back to rest while the other worked.

"Can I help?" asked Lyte.

"I believe you, my boy. Any strong man with a stout heart can do this sort of work, though no honest man likes it."

The temptation to inquire precisely as to the nature of this work was strong upon the passenger, but profiting from experience, he resisted it.

The work soon unfolded its own nature. In the first place, they took off the lid of the main hatch and fastened a broad plank (well soaped) on the precipitous slope which ran sheer off into the sea on the starboard side. Then, one by one, they passed up the cases of clocks and launched them into the deep. The work was simple enough, and would actually have afforded them considerable merriment if the loss of their three messmates, which had so recently occurred, had not oppressed them with a sense of awe and grief.

After two hours' brisk work at the main hatchway, they closed and battened it down again, and went to the fore hatch to relieve the ship equally in that part. While the move was being made, M'Leod withdrew his guest on the excuse of giving him a glass of bottled ale. He also had rum served out to the men, who were behaving splendidly under an unusual strain of labor.

"I don't intend you to work any more this watch, nor to-night, my friend," he then said to Lyte. "Give me a willing horse, and if I work him to death, call me a fool. You have done as much work these last two hours as any two men in the watch."

"I should like to work two hours in every watch, if you don't really object. The exercise would restore my mind and muscle," urged Lyte.

"You won't find shoveling that wheat about good for the lungs," resumed M'Leod.

This was coming very near the point, but Lyte asked no question, and tried to look indifferent.

"The truth is," continued the captain, "we've got to throw the whole cargo between-decks overboard, and then get down to that wheat with our broad wooden shovels, and ship half of it over to the port side. If it's wet, we shall have to pitch half of it after the clocks, that is, supposing we float long enough to do it. If it's dry, you'll find it terribly dusty and suffocating work. But I can't afford to refuse your help. We're

short-handed, and every hour is valuable. Do you know, Mr. Lyte—it may be soft of me—but I can't help feeling glad that my wife and little girl are praying for our safety every night and morning."

Then after a pause he went on: "I don't like parting with this cargo. It will cost me dear in more ways than one. But what cuts me is the loss of those three men. I once lost a whole boat's crew; but I hardly felt it more than I do this. Mr. Green was as good a man as ever walked the deck of a ship."

Lyte began to find many amiable traits in the character of his rollicking host, of whom it must be recorded that he did not drink to excess again during the remainder of the voyage, and that he acted with singular generosity to the relations of the three men who had been snatched so suddenly from his command.

But to return: it was found possible before night-fall to get at the lower main hatch and remove it. Then, amidst the breathless suspense of the whole ship's company, Mr. Jones and the carpenter went down with a lantern to examine. Would the wheat prove to be dry or wet, that is, had the *Adriatic* sprung a leak or not?

Before many minutes had elapsed—minutes which seemed like hours to all on deck—Mr. Jones passed up the word that the surface of the wheat was dry fore and aft. Crawling along the vacant space on the larboard side, they had felt with their fingers, and encountered no moisture. M'Leod uttered a great sigh of relief. He knew his ship to be tight and strong; but knowing also something of the might of wind and waves, had feared that during the few minutes when she was exposed to their full fury she had received an irreparable injury in her hull. Lyte looked at the burly, roistering fellow, and saw a dimness in his eyes.

"All's well, my lads. Now go to work again," was all he said. But the passenger understood that the lives of so many honest men weighed heavily on this skipper's conscience. For once the men stolidly disobeyed his order, still clustering round with anxious faces. There was but little space below for any one to work; and the wells were long ago choked up with wet grain, so that they could not be sounded nor the pumps used. The question still to be solved was, Would the bulk of wheat prove to be dry underneath?

"Let me go down with a shovel," ex-

claimed Lyte, confident in his strength, and burning with enthusiasm.

"Or me, Sir!" "Or me!" shouted two seamen, in a breath.

"Mr. Crays will stay here, and hold the line with the lantern," replied the captain. "The rest of you go away and work, like honest lads." Still the sailors closed around stolidly in a circle. "Mr. Lyte, you are too big to move down there. Can't you see I have sent down the two smallest men in the crew?" At which speech the sailors grinned, for it was notorious in the fore-castle that Mr. Jones thought himself rather a large man than otherwise.

Lyte was urgently impelled to retort, "Then how—the unmentionable—is the wheat to be shifted, and this horrible *list to starboard* to be got rid of?" but abstained.

Mr. Jones and the carpenter set to work with their huge wooden shovels, at first immediately under the hatchway, and burrowed down a little way; but presently, afraid of blocking up their own space for moving forward, Mr. Jones cried out, "You must haul away up there, Sir. We've hardly space to turn round as it is."

"My God!" exclaimed the captain, evidently startled; but, recovering himself in a moment, added, "Two of you bring buckets and lines at once, and give Mr. Jones some elbow-room down there."

It was scarcely sooner said than done. Two of the deck buckets, attached by the handles to two strong Manilla cords, were brought and lowered alternately, one being hauled up and emptied overboard while the other was being lowered and filled. But while the two willing hands had gone for the pails, Lyte heard one of the croakers say, "There was room enough and to spare when we put the lower hatch on in port. It's swelled from below, by ——" Whereupon Mr. Crays, stooping over the hatchway with his hanging lantern, turned upon the speaker with such a withering look of contempt that he sneaked away abashed behind the two front ranks of his companions. That any man in the crew should be mean enough to try and depress their spirits prematurely seemed to Mr. Crays a dastardly act, besides being an infringement of discipline and marine courtesy.

"The man spoke thoughtlessly, Mr. Crays. Hoist away there, my lads," cried the captain, cheerily, with another of those touches of tenderness which Lyte had perceived in his character. This little word of compas-

sion worked like magic in the crew. The buckets were hoisted up, hand over hand, passed from one to another, emptied overboard, and lowered again as fast as they could be filled. Not so easy a task, when we remember that the main-deck was wholly exposed, the bulwarks, etc., having been swept away, and the ship leaning fearfully on one side.

Before ten minutes had passed a considerable depth was reached. "Dry as dust down here, Sir," roared Mr. Jones, whose prodigious voice would have led a stranger to look for a Saxon giant instead of a diminutive navigator of Celtic origin.

"Work away a little to starboard!" cried the captain, more cheerfully.

"Half choked, Sir!" shrieked the mate, in a sudden falsetto, proceeding to sneeze and expectorate.

"Come up, then, and look sharp about it," replied the skipper. "And, carpenter, take two men and get your lights up quickly. Now, boatswain and Mr. Lyte! Plenty of room for you big fellows. Go and drive a passage right through to starboard, and send it all up. We must have space down there, and it has evidently shifted somewhat aft."

So the two half-choked men came up, and the two candidates for suffocation went down. At it they went, working into the compact mass on the right; and by the time that lights were in the foremast-head and the rigging on either side, the "bulk wheat" in the hold was pronounced to be dry right through from top to bottom, from port to starboard, and the *Adriatic* free from all suspicion of a leak.

A great cheer for the good ship burst spontaneously from the crew; another for the captain, and another for Mr. Lyte, who was "fit to be a seaman, every inch of him," as the sailors generously admitted.

"And now, my lads, what say you?" asked the skipper. "Bring three more lanterns on the poop nigh to the binnacle, so that the men at the wheel may join us, and we will read the burial service at the gangway over our three lost comrades. Good men and true they were. Then all hands to the capstan to grog, and to-morrow we'll right the good ship *Adriatic*."

A deep murmur of applause broke forth as honestly as the cheers had done. Whether the astute skipper had added a touch of popularity to his pious proposal by the suggestion of grog after prayers is not for this

chronicler to question; but certain it is that this truly religious service for the dead was celebrated not only without levity, but with some groans, many tears, and much reverence.

While the men were in the act of dispersing after their grog, a cry of "Sail on the lee bow!" ran along the decks. Strange as it will seem to those who read the sequel, it was the passenger who first gave the notice. When all hands (except Mr. Crays, who remained at the wheel) repaired to the capstan on the quarter-deck, after all had been some minutes at their devotions, Lyte, bethinking himself of the look-out and the pleasures of a secluded pipe, made his way to the fore-castle. No sooner had his sight accustomed itself to the misty light of the moon, rising in a clear white fog, than he became conscious of a large moving object, apparently not more than five hundred yards distant. His notice was soon taken up by a dozen voices, and ran from prow to poop; and before long he followed his own information, feeling an intense interest in the strange vessel, and being anxious to see what measures the captain would take with regard to her.

Telescopes and flag signals were useless in the doubtful light; but when the stranger saw the *Adriatic*, she fired off five rockets in succession as a signal of distress, but kept on running before the wind, only reducing her sail so as to let the *Adriatic* come alongside. The latter was keeping the wind about four points on her starboard quarter, to counteract in some measure her inclination to that side, so that she was bearing right down upon the stranger, drawing nearer to her every moment, as the moon rose higher above the mist, and revealed them more clearly to each other. They were both forging fast through the water, so M'Leod took in his foresail, that he might come up with the other more easily.

Mr. Jones was on the fore-castle with one trumpet, and special orders to speak first, M'Leod on the poop with another trumpet, and Lyte at his side, Mr. Crays steering, and all the rest of the crew in the lee rigging. "What do you make her out to be, Lyte?" asked the captain.

"A steamer in distress, running before the wind because she can't help herself," replied the passenger, without hesitation.

"You're right, too. You ought to have been a seaman, as the men say."

"I feel a terrible interest in her," said Lyte.

"That's quite another matter. I don't," retorted the captain. "In another two or three minutes you'll be asking me to lower a boat and lose another four men out of my crew, to try and bring some women on board at night, and with this heavy sea running, and only to drown the women after all."

"It's a beautiful night," pleaded the passenger; as indeed it was, with a strong fair breeze, and the moon shining more brightly every minute.

"I tell you a boat would be capsized in this sea before you could get her away from the ship's side," answered M'Leod.

Lyte was resolved not to provoke him by argument at a moment so critical to the fate of many persons. So he merely replied, shortly, "I suppose you know best." But it had not escaped his keen observation both that M'Leod thought the strange ship to be in danger, and that he was harassed with a slight doubt as to the extent of his duty toward those on board.

"She may not be in danger, after all?" he said, as a feeler.

But M'Leod answered, contemptuously: "Large steam-ships don't send before the wind under canvas only, and let off displays of fire-works for fun whenever a sail overhauls them. I see some ladies on the poop, and look at the people swarming like bees in the rigging and on the fore-castle. I fancy she's an emigrant ship outward bound, with her screw damaged, and perhaps her rudder too, and driven out of her course. How awkwardly they steer! Why, she's standing across our bow as if she wanted us to sink her. Bring her up a point or two, Mr. Crays! Keep your eye on that strange craft, and take us within speaking distance, but give her an easy berth. Use your own judgment when I'm busy."

"Would Muster Lyte lend I a hand?"

Pleased at the distinction, the landsman immediately took his station on the platform beside Mr. Crays, where their two tall, powerful forms stood out in bold relief at the helm of the huge ship, and appeared to the gaze of many an anxious spectator on board the disabled steamboat like the twin deities to the fainting Romans at the battle of Lake Regillus. It happened also that both the men wore rough dark pilot coats and pantaloons, and were in all external respects singularly alike, except that the amateur sailor wore an old blue flannel

cap, and the professional one a black cap with a gilt band round it.

"We shall forge ahead too fast for her. Boatswain, down with the main try-sail!" cried the skipper.

The unfortunate steam-ship, seeing them shortening sail, now imitated this measure, but lowered a much larger sail in proportion to her size than the *Adriatic's* main try-sail, in consequence of which the latter was going through the water much faster than the former when she overhauled her.

As though to compensate for the brevity of this personal maritime interview, Mr. Crays (assisted by Lyte) steered the *Adriatic* with such skill that you might almost have thrown a ship's biscuit from one deck on to the other.

"Ship a-hoy-ey-oy!" roared little Mr. Jones from the forecandle, as soon as he came abreast of the steamer's poop. You would have thought from the noise he made that the unfortunate vessel was disappearing on the horizon.

In reply to this Boanerges, Lyte distinctly heard the silvery laughter of young women on the strange poop. How it thrilled through him, and reminded him of the gently flowing Peddle, and the nymphs whose laughter had made music on its rippling surface! He turned his head a little from the people in misfortune, whom he was powerless to assist, but listened acutely.

The strange captain was on a narrow gallery which ran from the poop to the top of a roundhouse on the main-deck, and so on to the forecandle. As the *Adriatic* passed him he moved along this gallery, taking no notice of Boanerges, but speaking rapidly and distinctly, though with a German accent, to Captain M'Leod; thus he kept up the colloquy at last from the very bow of his vessel, having commenced it nearly on the poop.

"This is the *Hanseatica*, bound from Bremen to New York, touching at Southampton. We are nine days out. We have sprung a leak; have twelve feet of water in the vessel. It is gaining every hour. The screw is broken. And the rudder is so loose the ship will only go straight before the wind."

All this he got through distinctly, and with every word audible, by the time that the poop of the *Adriatic* had reached his roundhouse. Then he paused with a polite gesture, hoping that in such an extremity the Englishman would offer to take him and his company on board.

"Curse the Dutch idiot!" muttered M'Leod between his teeth. Then spoke loud and harshly: "We are dismayed, as you see, and have thrown half a valuable cargo overboard, and now have to shift our lower-deck cargo. All our water is washed overboard, except a little in the iron tank; and our bulwarks and cook's galley, as you see. Moreover, three of the best men in my crew were washed off the poop and drowned."

"Mein Gott! I am sorry," cried the courteous German, who must indeed have been sorry at this useless tirade, while the *Adriatic* was rushing past, and he was already at his last footing on the prow of his sinking ship.

"Will you not at the least take our ladies on to your ship?" he screamed.

"Send 'em," roared M'Leod.

"I can not. Mein Gott! I can not. Both my quarter-boats is washed away."

"Jolly-boat," shouted M'Leod, pointing with his brass trumpet to a huge boat which was suspended upside down over the fore hatch.

"It is broke in many bits. *It is rotten!*" screamed the German, as he stood alone on his black prow, wringing his hands, and looking a very impersonation of helpless agony.

The *Adriatic* was now fast forging ahead.

A yell of anguish and dismay, shrill enough to split the welkin, and piercing the ear like poisoned arrows, arose from the decks of the doomed steam-ship.

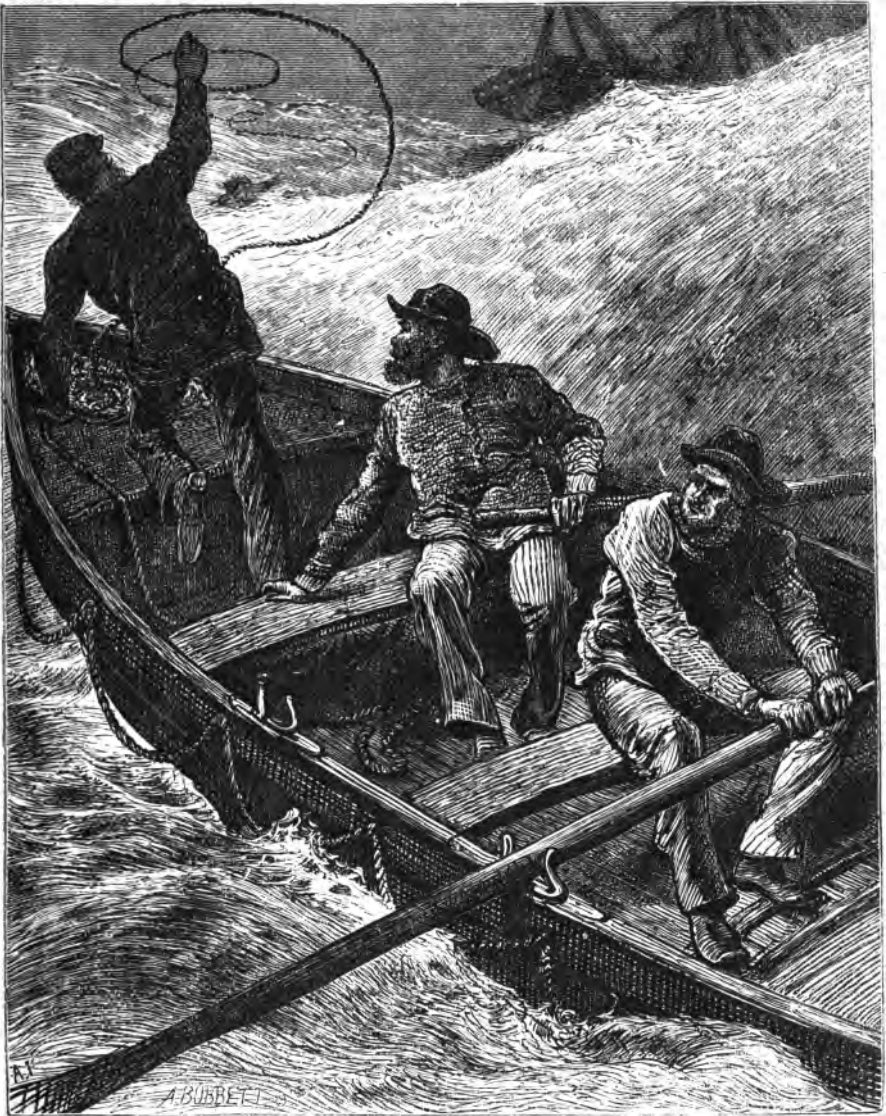
"By the God that made me, Mr. M'Leod, I for one can't stand this," Lyte said, calmly, relinquishing the wheel to Mr. Crays, and flinging off his coat.

"What do you propose to do, Sir?" M'Leod asked, sternly.

"What *can* I do?" asked Lyte, half frenzied. "I can go and die with them, if I can't help them to keep their pumps at work till they fall in with a ship commanded by a man with a human heart. Anyhow, I am going to swim off to them at once. I should blush to step on English ground if I left those foreigners to die like kittens."

"That vessel will sink to-morrow between ten o'clock and noon," M'Leod coolly replied.

"Then I'll sink with them, and may our blood be on your head and on the head of your wife and child, you unmanly man! Good-by, Mr. Crays. Here goes!"



"OARS CAME SPLASHING UP. A COIL OF LINE WAS CHUCKED BEFORE HIS FACE."

And having by this time kicked off his boots, away he flew like an arrow into the boiling surge, cleaving the sea before his head with pointed fingers; and rising again some yards away, he turned and swam with the sea, merely uttering a shout now and then when soaring at the top of a wave—an old cry which he remembered being used by the German sailors at Hamburg and Bremen. Of course he had no intention of swimming any distance, knowing well that the crew of the *Hanseatica* had seen his plunge, and would bring the vessel near him and fling

him ropes, perhaps with a life-buoy attached.

The astonishment of M'Leod was literally boundless. Up to the very moment when his guest flew off the taffrail he believed that Lyte was merely acting a part to coerce him into lowering a boat that night against his own judgment. Being an obstinate Briton, he chose not to be coerced, but would have endeavored to restrain Lyte from such a rash act had he really credited his intention. First he would have told him (what was simple truth) that he had

not the least intention to desert the forlorn *Hanseatica*, but that, arguing from her captain's statement that she would float till noon to-morrow, he had resolved to take her passengers and crew off to-morrow shortly after daybreak, unless in the mean time a vessel bound westward should come upon the scene, and so do some of them a still greater service by taking them to America. This was the more prudent plan also in behalf of his own crew, as the sea was abating every hour, and the labor would probably be unattended with danger to-morrow; also in behalf of the owners of the steam-ship, as it would be more easy for them to secure the insurance moneys from the underwriters if it could be proved that she was actually about to founder when deserted. Then, if his headstrong guest had refused to listen to reason, M'Leod was not sure but what he might have yielded, and let the obstinate fellow take the life-boat and the boatswain and four volunteers, and go and fetch the ladies. But no men or low trollopes of women would he have on board till he had made arrangements for stowing them away where the clocks had been.

Now, however, he did not hesitate for an instant. In less time than it has cost me to explain his negative conduct, the skipper had proved his activity and the sincere regard which he had acquired for Bedford Lyte. Even in this last altercation Lyte had enhanced this regard, not using a single coarse or mean expression, and nobly abstaining from claiming service on the score of the tremendous service which he had rendered to the ship and all on board of her.

In less than five minutes the life-boat, with the four best men as oarsmen, and Mr. Crays as cockswain, and the boatswain in the bows, was cleaving the moon-lit waves. The *Adriatic* had shortened sail, and was dodging to and fro warily with men on the look-out all over her rigging. The *Hanseatica* had tried to pick up the swimmer, and failed, owing to her defective rudder; but as he was beginning to wish for his cork jacket while swimming in her wake, and hoping she would throw him a life-buoy, oars came splashing up; a coil of line was chucked before his face; he laid hold, drew it short, and was pulled under the gunwale of the *Adriatic's* life-boat. Two stalwart arms were protruded, he made a spring upward with all his might, and they caught him under the armpits and hauled him in.

"How be you, Muster Lyte?" asked Mr. Crays.

"Jolly, thank you, Crays. I began to feel tired, though, when you came up. It's awkward swimming in a sea with these clothes on."

"You are to drink this now, Sir." (*This was whisky and bitters.*) So he drank it without making any wry faces, and then *did* begin to feel jolly.

"Now thank you all, my merry, merry men," he cried. "But easy, lads, easy! Where are you rowing to? I'm going on board the What's-her-name. You don't think I took that header for nothing."

"We be to putt you on board of she, and leave you there for the night, or to fetch off the saloon ladies to the *Adriatic*, or to take you back as we be, whichever you do choose, Muster Lyte," said Crays, categorically.

"I vote for fetching off the ladies," said Lyte; "but, in that case, how about the rest of this ship's company, passengers and all?"

"Why, *Muster Lyte*!" exclaimed Crays, reproachfully, "you didn't go for to think that our skipper, whom we've sailed with this thirteen voyages or more, was going to leave all them poor creeturs to perish! He know'd about how long the lobsided old thing would float. He wanted to hold off and on till daylight, and then fetch 'em off comfortable when this sea had gone down a bit more. It's well enough now when you *be* at sea, but it's orkard alongside o' ships, partickler at night."

After this oration Lyte paused, and then said: "I see I have done our good captain wrong in thinking he was going to desert these foreigners. But I'll give £5 apiece to every man in this boat's crew for saving me from drowning (which you've done, lads, and no mistake), and £5 apiece to each if you'll come now and fetch off the ladies from the *Hanseatica*."

"Hooroar! hooroar!" they shouted; and again the life-boat danced over the waves, and soon drew alongside the lee of the steam-ship, which contrived to luff up a few points in order to *make* a lee-side for the protection of the gallant little boat. Only Mr. Crays and Mr. Lyte went on board, the latter of whom the captain, Overbeck, received at the gangway, and clasping the dripping hero in his arms, squeezed the water out of his scanty garments, and poured words of gratitude and devotion into his ears. He had seen the dispute on the retiring poop of the great ship, had seen the gallant plunge,

and heard the swimmer's German shouts from the summit of the waves. He had endeavored with his own hands to cast lines to the swimmer as the *Hanseatica* passed him in its wayward course, and was in the act of lashing together some spars to be cast astern for his support, when the life-boat appeared rowing straight to the scene of his struggles. This good man insisted upon taking Lyte into the roundhouse, and clothing him in dry garments from his own chest, before he would conduct him to the saloon. Meanwhile he sent to the ladies, requesting them to hasten their preparations for departure, and promising himself to bring any valuables which they might have to leave in his own box to the *Adriatic* on the following morning. "For me," he said to Lyte, "if I am permitted to bring a few articles for those charming young creatures, my own chronometers and sextants, and half a dozen shirts, I am more than satisfied. You are my benefactor, and your captain is not so hard of heart as I thought him to be. Oh, it is too terrible to think that he might have sailed away had you not plunged into the mighty ocean!"

On board the poor crippled, helpless steamship an absolute panic had prevailed for a few minutes among passengers and crew when the *Adriatic* forged ahead without any apparent intention of rescuing them from their fate. All their four sea-worthy boats had been carried away or dashed to pieces by the fury of the sea. Even upon the poor old inverted jolly-boat a topmast had fallen and staved it in. The other topmasts were overboard, the rudder was half torn from the stern-post, the engines were wholly incapacitated for work, and, worse than all, the ship had sprung a fearful leak, and the steam-pump being unavailable, it was found impossible to prevent the water from gaining upon them every hour, though one gang relieved another without cessation at the hand-pumps. Even without further accident (and to what chances and risks were they not exposed?) it was scarcely possible to keep the ship afloat another twenty-four hours.

The crew consisted of thirty-two hands, all told. There were some seventy-five steerage passengers on board, men, women, and children—Germans and Danes. In the saloon were two German gentlemen, merchants, and an Englishman escorting his wife and her two sisters. Only the latter group and the superior officers of the vessel

were allowed on the poop deck. They (the cabin passengers) sat there while the *Adriatic* was careering past them. She was for about a minute not more than fifty yards distant. Only one short, thickset, fierce man, with a brass trumpet in his hand, stood at the taffrail of her poop. He wore a maroon worsted jacket, like the bar-keeper in a London gin-palace. This was Captain McLeod. Behind him stood two broad-shouldered, splendid men, looking like twins, and taller even than they were from the little elevation of the platform on which they stood to turn the wheel. The only peculiarity about either of these two was a faded blue flannel cap which one wore; but his back was turned upon the steam-ship.

The two Germans sat pale and mute, but gazing with agony at the *Adriatic*. The Englishman, a fine, tall, bearded soldier, rose and waved his undress military cap. "Help! help! you Englishmen; for the love of God! You won't leave women to sink in this cursed ocean. Help!" But the wind swept his words away, and the two captains, bawling at each other through their speaking-trumpets, overbore the sound of his voice. Seeing that he had spoken in vain, and hurt as much at the hardness of the hearts that could resist such an appeal as at the fate impending over his charge, he looked down at his beautiful young wife with a face upon which despair was slowly creeping. A smile was only fading out of her bright young face. She and her younger sister were not old enough to appreciate danger. They had just been laughing at Mr. Jones's stentorian greeting. The elder sister, who was going "out" to meet her husband, seemed more sad and indifferent to good or evil than frightened.

No sooner had the *Adriatic* passed them fairly than the expression of the Englishman's face underwent another change, which his wife quickly discerned. "Why, George dear, what has happened now? Are we all going up to heaven in a balloon? Tell me quickly. Nothing can surprise me any more."

"Nelly, my love! Janet! Don't you see him?" he said, pointing ecstatically to the stern of the *Adriatic*. They turned instantly, and gazed with wide-open blue eyes and envious black curling lashes.

"Don't you see him, my darlings? It's Lyte! It's my dear old Bedford, the truest man and best friend in the world. Don't you know his cap? the old university blue

in which he won every race he rowed. Look at him. He has left the wheel. He's pitching into that brute of a skipper in the taster's jacket and the penny trumpet. He's taking his coat off. See! can't you see, girls? He's going to thrash him. Won't he give it him? That's all."

The two German gentlemen, who were not familiarly acquainted with English vernacular, could not quite follow Captain Fuller's free and easy diction; but being highly interested in his sudden hilarity, and charmed with any prospect of a change, to which they thought this source of interest might conduce, came and craned over the taffrail, staring also with wide blue eyes at the dumb-show on the poop of the retreating ship.

Janet's heart leaped and bounded within her so furiously, or rather so gleefully, that she had much ado not to leap overboard herself. "Hold me tight, Nelly," she exclaimed. "Blanche dear, you hold me tight on this side. Don't let me jump over into the horrid sea. I can't quite see him, my eyes are so full of tears. I am crying for joy. It is my 'Sir,' you know, Nelly, my own 'Sir.' Is it really him? Is that his old broad back turned to us, with no coat on and a blue shirt? I remember his broad back in church. They won't let him jump into this nasty rough sea to come to me, will they? But he taught Berty to swim. He can swim. He can do every thing. You know he can, Nelly. And why don't you say so? Every thing!" Thus the innocent prattled in her joyous bewilderment, while Bedford Lyte was waging his hot and hasty war of words with M^rLeod.

Presently Fuller started, seeing his friend apparently mounting the rail for that headlong and fearful plunge into the mighty sea. "Look at him. Was there ever such a trump? He is going to swim off to us."

"A trump! Was is das?" remarked the Hamburger. "Perhaps das is Herr Van Tromp!"

"Hullo! There he goes! Hurrah! God bless him! Was there ever such a good pluck'd one? Eh, mein herr! what do you think of that? That's the way an Englishman bathes—likes deep water and plenty of sea-room."

But Janet was frightened now, and well she might be; for, remember, this was transacted by moonlight, and if an envious cloud or mist had obscured that luminary, both ships would inevitably have lost sight of the solitary swimmer. Even in her full

effulgence none but the most daring and powerful swimmer could venture on such a plunge into such a sea. Yet, as some men have dived from the yard-arm of a full-rigged ship, the feat was far from singular.

The ships as yet were not very far apart; and at first it seemed easy enough to steer the *Hanseatica* two points out of her course to pass close to the swimmer, drop him a noosed rope to slip under his arms, and so lift him on to the deck. In order to make sure of his new friend, Captain Overbeck took in yet another large sail, which reduced the pace of her progress by one-third. Alas! shortly after this was done, and they had arrived almost abreast of poor Bedford, they found that the vessel had lost all steerage-way from the slowness of her movement, and were unable to force her near enough to assist their benefactor. But while their futile efforts were being made, a joyous sight greeted Fuller's eyes.

"I told you so, girls!" he exclaimed, though he had omitted to tell them any thing of the kind. "Look, there comes the life-boat. A beauty she is, too, and well manned. I thought the bold buccaneer would be afraid to let Lyte drown. His college would have come down upon the skipper, and had him hanged. You can't drown a man of that stamp like a poor devil of a Dutch emigrant. See how splendidly they steer—right toward him!"

"Why do they twist about so, then?" asked poor little Janet, who was picking up a little courage now that she saw a fine handsome boat rowed by four men, steered by a giant, and with an amphibious monster in the bows, sent out on purpose to pick the gentleman up after his moonlight bath. She thought no longer of their own peril, but of his, and expected to see the boat going straight as an arrow, or a skiff on the placid river Peddle.

Fuller explained to her that it was necessary to meet each roller as it approached with the pointed bow of the boat. All she cared about just now was "Sir's" safety; and lo! now it was secured. She could see him distinctly drinking something out of a flask, then, after the oars had all been still a while, a loud hurrah! and then the boat came dancing over the waves swiftly toward the *Hanseatica*. She hid her face in her hands and listened. There once more were the well-remembered sounds, the swing, the pulse, the splash of unseen oars, coming to her from the unseen world, bringing life

and joy to her heart, bringing her lover, who was come, having risked his own life to save hers, to make her one with him, and keep her safely forever. Yes, he did love her still. She could not, would not, doubt it.

Now while Bedford was being dressed by Captain Overbeck, Fuller ascertained from Mr. Crays that he had no anticipation of finding any friends on board this ill-starred ship, and that he expected to find none but Germans in the Bremen steamer. So they agreed to hide and let him see Janet first alone. Fuller knocked at the captain's door, and whispered a communication which induced that officer to withdraw at the door of the saloon. Finding himself alone there, and the state-room doors around all closed, Lyte called out, "Ladies! please not to be longer than you can help."

Then a door at his elbow was opened, and Janet was standing alone in the doorway. She wore only a plain black velvet frock. But her eyes were dancing with the light of love. Her lips were just parted, like the carmine petals of a fuchsia disclosing a milk-white calyx underneath. There still hovered about her a fragrance of dewy rose-leaves, and her glorious hair was massed in all its profusion on her comely head.

"Am I dreaming?" he asked.

There were two lamps hanging up over the table in the middle of the saloon. One of these threw a subdued light upon her, and she assuredly was a real woman—really his own Janet, only grown far more beautiful than his imagination had pictured her in its wildest dream.

"Are you really Janet?" he asked.

There was something so reverential in his admiration for her beauty that it consoled her for the disappointment of finding that he had not come solely or specially to rescue her.

"Did not you know I was here, Sir?" she asked, timidly.

It was the first time she had ever called him "Sir."

"I had much less hope of seeing you than of being in paradise to-day, dear. Indeed, this is a foretaste of paradise, seeing you again after so many years. I never used to speak to you like that in the old days; and now that I would do so, perhaps you will not let me."

"You took away my dear old Gamp, you know," she replied, archly. "And it is not me you have come to save to-night." So saying, she peeped up slyly at his puzzled face.

"I can not honestly say it was, dear," he urged, with provoking conscientiousness. "Yet I felt strangely drawn toward this vessel, and I fancied I heard you laugh when little Boanerges hailed it. I could not look toward the deck when I thought I could not help the people on it; but in two minutes I had determined to help them, or die in the attempt."

He saw nothing of her now but her golden hair glistening in the light of the dim lamp. It almost touched his breast as she stooped and murmured, lowly, "Do you love—me—Sir?"

"Look at me, darling," he said, clasping both his arms round her little waist.

"I'm afraid," she whispered. "Oh no, I'm not. There!" and lifting her face, she looked modestly and sweetly into his "dear sad eyes," as she used to call them.

"Do I love you?" he repeated. "Well, dear, I have loved you so truly and so intensely for five or six years that I may honestly say this most blessed moment is the climax of every moment of time for all those years. But may I hope that you will forgive me all my harshness, and that you will love me a little?"

"I want to be your little wife," she whispered.

Then he at last, after so many years of waiting, of self-denial, self-control, and resignation, yielded to that impulse which is common to all men so situated. Nor did she affect a false modesty, but allowed him to feel that she considered herself in a manner his already. She knew the man so well at length, his honor, loyalty, and integrity, that she already experienced the repose of love. She could lean upon him in all things, or, if need be, could lie in his arms like an infant. He was strong enough physically, intellectually, and morally for her to repose in him with a perfect trust.

"What in the world were you going to New York for?" he asked her, as they returned to the *Adriatic*.

"To find my Sir, and give him back his fortune," she saucily said.

"Or?" he urged.

"Or his little girl."

Thus the formal courtship of Janet Browne and Bedford Lyte was, after all, of brief duration, and under disadvantageous circumstances, yet was it perhaps as pregnant with joy as many elaborate and luxurious wooings. The remainder of the voyage to

the British Channel was a series of incessant hardships and apprehensions, for the rudder of the *Adriatic* became less and less trustworthy every day. They were crowded with guests, for whom they could neither provide water enough to drink nor decently cooked food to eat. The beds, fortunately, had been brought from the Bremen vessel and placed between-decks. Moreover, these people were for the most part angry, discontented, and more dirty even than a scarcity of fresh-water rendered necessary. Three strong men died for want of water, and even the ladies could only have a short half pint each per diem.

Instead of proceeding to Canada by way of New York, Captain and Mrs. Fuller returned to their sister's wedding, which took place at the rectangular "dry-dock" church in the ensuing March. Having thus had more time to think of his future plans, and a deep repugnance to subjecting his wife a second time to the terrors of the ocean, Fuller sold out of the regiment in Canada into which he had exchanged, and took his wife to live at his own place in Oxfordshire, where Bedford and his wife often visit them. Janet struggled hard to have her nuptials celebrated at the dear old church near the abbey, where he and she had long ago worshipped together, and even then innocently loved each other. But on this point Mr. Browne was adamant. Where he worshipped, there should his children be baptized, confirmed, receive communion, and (if girls) be wedded. So they yielded, on condition that the Rev. Cyprian Key should marry them, which he did. Lyte suggested that an ecclesiastic of the Browne family should "assist," by way of making peace, but the only available one had tried to lecture Mr. Browne on his anticipatory death-bed, and he could "bear the sight of" that divine less than before. So this amiable proposition was frustrated. The old proverb that "it's an ill wind which blows nobody good" was curiously exemplified, as we have seen, in the case of the *Hanseatic's* loss, and the gain which accrued to Nelly and Janet. It also proved a benefit to poor Mrs. George Baily, who received letters in England informing her that her husband had died in New York rather before the date on which she had expected to arrive.

The poor little English tomtit fulfilled its last mission in obliging its master to cross the Atlantic in a ship which was destined to rescue his bride from a watery grave. It only survived until the night before the wedding, when, at midnight, while roosting on the rail at the foot of Lyte's bed, it suddenly, and contrary to custom, lowered its second leg, grasped the rail with both feet, and finding its hold to slacken even so, fluttered to Bedford's pillow, and died in the hand that projected from under his drowsy head. On his bridal morn Bedford wrapped the remains of his faithful and most serviceable friend in a parchment scroll, wherein were written certain words of the great Master as to the Divine care for such humble creatures, and carried the parcel to Tobias Graves, with orders to bury it decently in a coffin of zinc, soldered, and cased with oak, in consecrated ground. So the heart of the ancient grave-digger was cheered on this festive occasion with the secret prospect of a speedy interment. Thus also did Janet lose her last surviving rival to "Sir's" affections.

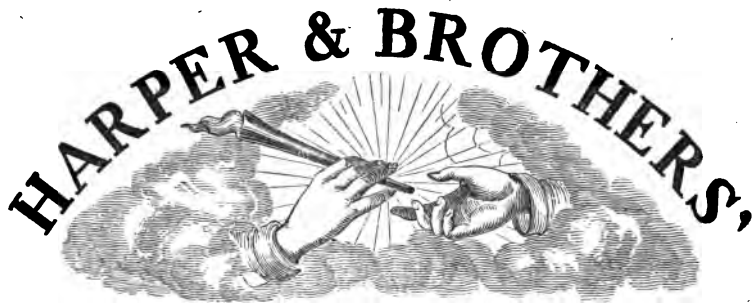
Mr. Browne still thrives at Pedlington in a green old age. His gentle wife still watches over him and all her scattered brood with unflinching tenderness. Frank, who as yet has been too fastidious to marry, devotes much of his superfluous energy to tormenting sister Joan, who is developing the fruit of an acidulated temper on the apex of her Roman nose. Albert has withdrawn to the cheerful village of Tiddenden, where he reads melancholy effusions, and endeavors to relieve the firm of his annuity by perilous evolutions on (and off) a bicycle.

We may conclude this simple chronicle by remarking that about a year after the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Bedford Lyte, the former's only relative died, and, to recompense him for previous injuries, left him an ample property, saddled with the condition that he should invest 12,000 or 13,000 in land. He therefore purchased a pretty cottage and model farm on the Thames, near his friend Captain Fuller; and Blanche, until her second marriage, with Maynard Martin, Esq., of Plumstead Manor, in Kent (her junior, some say), used to divide her time chiefly between Mrs. Fuller, of Watermead, and Mrs. Bedford Lyte, of Abbey Cottage.

THE END.

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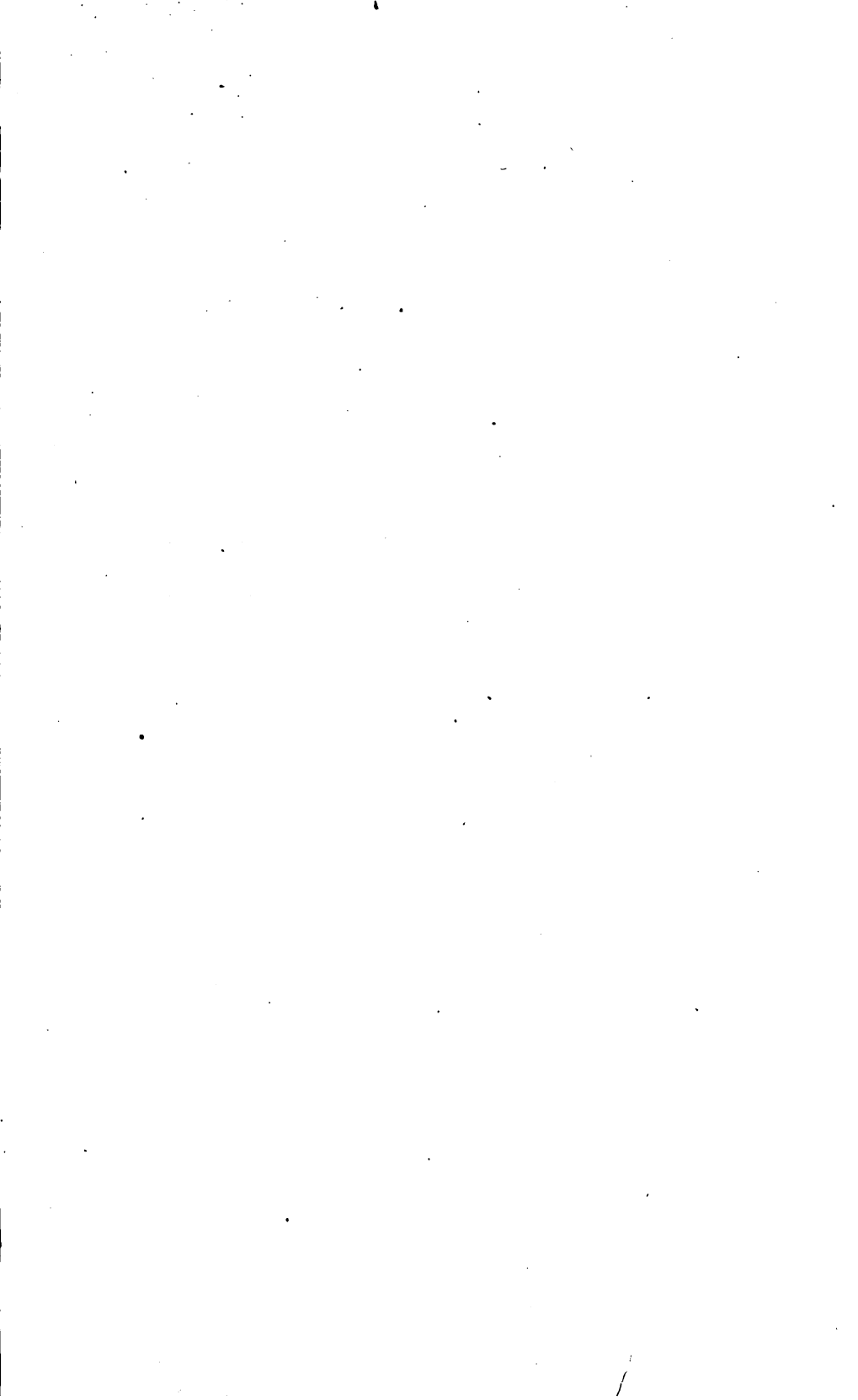
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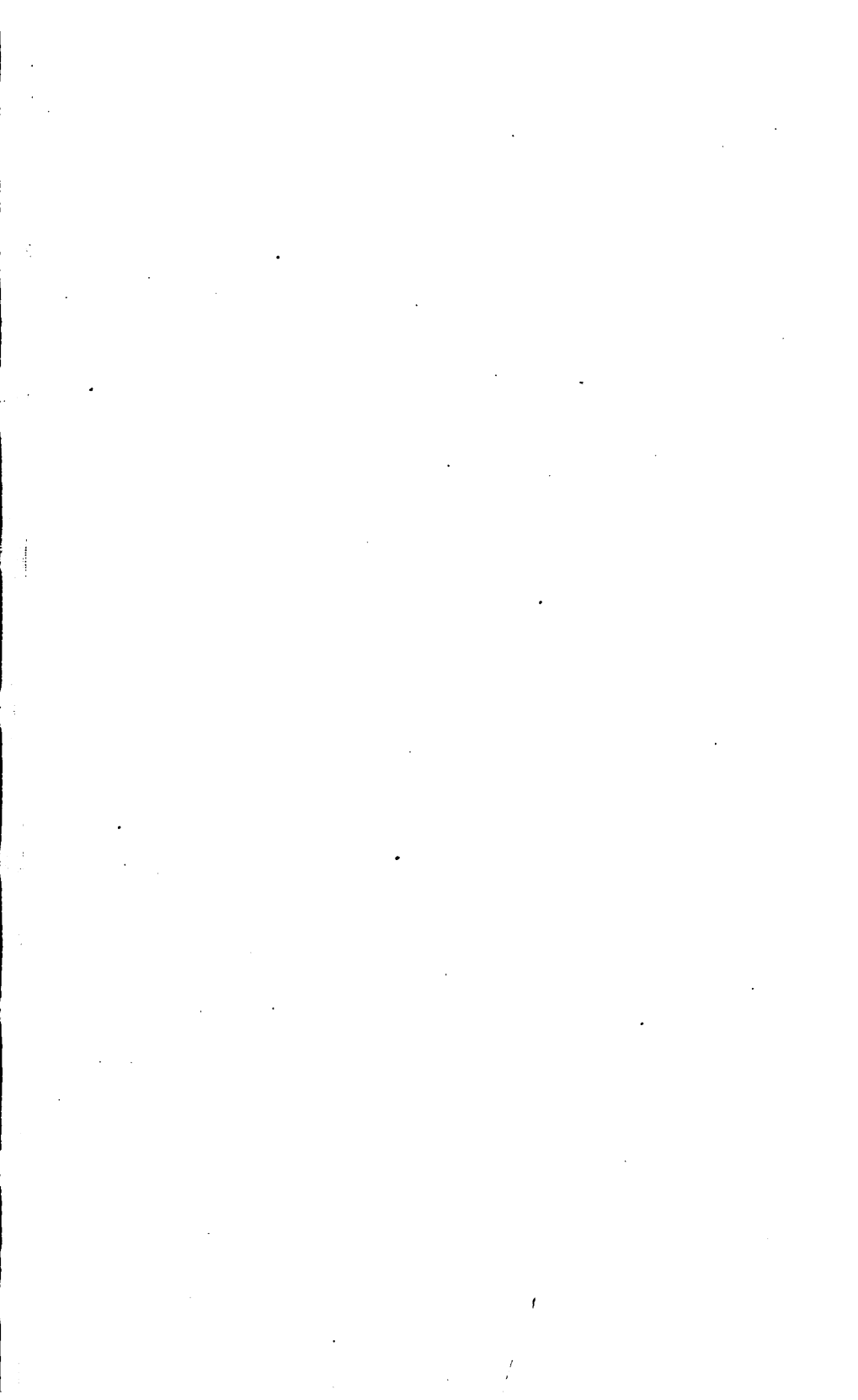
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